

Y Intergenerational Leadership?: YWCA Solomon Islands’ Feminist Rights-Based Approach to Young Women, Power and Equality

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Abstract

YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach demonstrates that fulfillment of young women's right to participate in public life and decision-making inside women's organizations can simultaneously impact the material reality of rights by increasing rights fulfillment in young women's everyday lives. This feminist ethnographic account of YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach includes a multi-faceted set of strategies to support the fulfillment of young women's rights. Despite the challenges YWCA Solomon Islands faces to full implementation, there is great potential to scale up its feminist rights-based approach to support rights fulfillment in other women's organizations and communities in Solomon Islands and around the world. Calling for a new right to leadership, this study contributes an analysis of the intersections of generational and gender inequality. Further, the Y Intergenerational Leadership? Framework can be used as a resource by women's organizations seeking to support young women's leadership and increase the fulfillment of rights.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AWID	Association for Women's Rights in Development
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEDAW Committee	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
EVAW	Solomon Islands National Policy on Eliminating Violence Against Women
FWRM	Fiji Women's Rights Movement
GEWD	Solomon Islands National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Development
GR 19	CEDAW Committee's General Recommendation No. 19 on Violence Against Women
GR 23	CEDAW Committee's General Recommendation No. 23 on Article 7 (Political and Public Life)
GR 28	CEDAW Committee's General Recommendation No. 28 on Article 2 (Core Obligations of State Parties)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
RBA	Rights-based Approach
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
SIPPA	Solomon Islands Planned Parenthood Association
WDD	Women's Development Division of the Solomon Islands Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs

Women's NGO	Women's Non-governmental Organization (used interchangeably with women's organization)
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association
YWCA Solomon Islands	Young Women's Christian Association of Solomon Islands
World YWCA	World Young Women's Christian Association

Chapter 1: Introduction

Y Intergenerational Leadership?: YWCA Solomon Islands' Feminist Rights-Based Approach to Young Women, Power and Equality is a study of YWCA Solomon Islands' intergenerational and young women's leadership model. Through its feminist rights-based approach, YWCA Solomon Islands demonstrates that fulfillment of young women's right to participate in public life and decision-making inside women's organizations can simultaneously impact the material reality of rights by increasing rights fulfillment in young women's everyday lives. YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach includes a multi-faceted set of strategies to support the fulfillment of young women's rights, including: (a) participation of grassroots young women with diverse intersectional identities as both a means and a goal; (b) space for young women to articulate their priorities and organizational responsiveness to those priorities; (c) institutional supports that build capacity for young women's leadership, including a culture of mentorship and young women teams; (d) young women knowing and claiming their rights as 'power within'; (e) shared power, leadership and decision-making as 'power with'; (f) community engagement; (g) growing the organization's constituency based on the belief that all young women have the right to rights; (h) growing public awareness of women's rights; and (i) supporting young women to engage with duty-holders in communities, the country and internationally to advocate for their rights and hold duty-bearers to account. Despite the challenges YWCA Solomon Islands faces to full implementation of its feminist rights-based approach, there is great potential to scale up its intergenerational and young women's leadership model to support rights fulfillment in other women's organizations and communities in Solomon Islands and around the world.

This study is simultaneously the story of my journey to find and document women's organizations that effectively develop, support and sustain young women's leadership. Focused on the nexus of generational and gender inequalities, it explores organizational strategies for practicing equality and fulfilling human rights. To introduce this story, I begin with my passion for young women's leadership and what motivated research into YWCA Solomon Islands' leadership model. I then explain key theoretical concepts including feminist analyses of power, generation as an aspect of intersectionality, rights-based approaches, and the legal framework of rights. Finally I explain my methodology and research process. Later, it is upon this foundation that I will build advocacy for the recognition of a new right to leadership. The foundation will also support my feminist rights-based Y Intergenerational Leadership? Framework. The first block of the foundation is my personal journey toward rights-based intergenerational leadership.

My Journey Began...

This paper is the story of my journey to document YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach to young women's and intergenerational leadership. During this process, I aged out of my identity as a young woman¹ but remained a lifelong champion of young women's right to lead. I am grateful to YWCA Solomon Islands and the global YWCA movement for teaching me the potential of feminist rights-based approaches to transform power dynamics, further gender and generational equality, hold ourselves and our organizations accountable to young women, fulfill rights, and achieve social change.

This journey started when I was seven. I was a quiet child who preferred the company of adults to other children. I was sitting under the table one day listening to my dad and his friend

¹ I reached my thirty-first birthday. In this paper, young woman is defined as aged thirty or under based on the definition affirmed by the global YWCA movement in the World YWCA Constitution adopted July 2007 (World YWCA, 2007, p. 11).

talking. They were talking about being parents and their hopes and dreams for their children. I was half daydreaming and half paying attention to the conversation when I heard my dad say, “I don’t know what I would do if I had a son who was gay. I couldn’t deal with that. I couldn’t have a gay son.”

I remained quiet under the table but my mind was screaming, “That’s not fair. You should love your kids no matter what. If my brother was gay I would still love him, and you should too.” Looking back, I’m not even sure I understood what it meant to identify as gay but I know I was very clear that respect and unconditional love should guide interactions with family and community. At that moment, everything inside me coalesced into one tiny social justice activist. At that moment, I decided to be me.

More recently, I was a young woman working as Executive Director of a national Canadian women’s organization and feeling the same call to social justice activism. My pushing for safe spaces for young women’s leadership within my organization was met with relentless bullying that eventually pushed me out of the organization altogether. There I was, an advocate for young women’s leadership, unable to make inroads in an organization in which I held a formal leadership position; in which I supposedly shared power.

At the same time I was sitting on the World YWCA board of directors as a Vice President, one of the most empowering experiences of my life. Just days after the new World YWCA Constitution was adopted in 2007, I was elected part of a World YWCA board of directors of which 55% were young women. I was treated as a leader equal in value to every other woman on the board. I chaired a board committee, the first ever comprised entirely of young women aged 30 and under. I sat on the Finance and Human Resources committees. I was chosen to attend the UN Commission on the Status of Women as part of the Advocacy Team,

and to speak with UN Deputy Secretary General Asha-Rose Migiro about young women's leadership.

Unable to reconcile these two simultaneous experiences, I felt like I was living two separate lives; like I was on a collision course with myself and unable to get out of my own way. I had so many unanswered questions. At first, the questions centred on my personal responsibility for the situation. What was I doing differently in my two roles that caused people to react in opposite ways to my leadership? What was I doing wrong? Why had I been hired in the Executive Director role in the first place? What expectations had I left unfulfilled? How could I behave more like a leader in my paid work so that people would respond to me as an equal rather than "just a young woman"?

I started to talk with other young women from around the world about my experiences, and realized I was not alone. My experience of being devalued as a leader and excluded from decision-making was far from unique. Many other young women had similar stories.

That's when I got angry. I spent time in community meetings, training sessions, workshops and events questioning why young women were being systematically excluded from shared power, leadership and decision-making in women's organizations and movements. When an older woman stood up in a conference plenary and lamented the paucity of young women to take up the "cause" for "the women's movement," I stood up, identified as a young woman leader, and called for shared power with young women as a way to build bridges between older and younger women leaders. When this was met with strained silence, a quick change of subject, or outright hostility, I changed tactics. The next time an older woman stood up and mourned the death of the women's movement at the hands of apathetic young women, I walked deliberately to the microphone and with anger vibrating through every syllable announced, "The

best way to get young women to take up leadership of the women's movement is for older women to relinquish their death grip on power and to get the hell out of the way." Predictably, this was not the most effective way to open dialogue, build bridges, nor engender safe spaces for shared power and leadership.

Slowly, I came to realize that I was not responsible for being bullied, undermined, discriminated against and excluded from the decision-making table. As I stopped blaming myself, my anger evolved from paralyzing to constructive. I started to ask different questions. What makes one NGO a safe space for young women's leadership and another a site of violations of young women's rights (or both simultaneously for different young women, or for the same young women at different times)? How can we learn from NGOs that support young women's leadership? What organizational models or approaches do they employ? Can other NGOs learn from their experiences?

I realized that being confrontational, while cathartic in the short-term, was not an effective long-term strategy to make space for young women's leadership in women's movements and organizations. I wanted to do something. I wanted to lead change. My thesis research grew out of my unconditional love and respect for people and communities, which sparked my social justice activism in the beginning, and my commitment to creating safe spaces in which young women leaders can fully and equally participate in leadership and decision-making. I remain a champion of young women's leadership committed to shared power, leadership and decision-making in women's movements and organizations.

I began advocating for young women's leadership because being bullied, undermined, discriminated against and excluded from the decision-making table felt wrong. I wanted my study to create space for participants to share different perspectives on power dynamics in

women's organizations, including why and how power is invisibilized (Fellows & Razack, 1998), the power dynamics of empowerment discourses, the ways in which power can be made visible, and strategies that allow power to be shared. I was simultaneously interested in discussions happening within the wider YWCA movement problematizing meaningful inclusion of young women leaders, struggles to define "safe spaces" for young women's leadership (World YWCA, 2013b), and considerations of the implications of rights-based approaches to intergenerational leadership (United Nations Children's Fund, 2003; Nash, 2011). My research is also inspired by Audre Lorde's call for women to collectively use our different strengths to co-construct a world where all people can thrive (Lorde, 1984, pp. 111-113).

Important Theoretical Concepts

There are a number of underlying theoretical assumptions in this research that need to be explained at the outset. First, feminist analyses of power are privileged in my analysis. Feminist analyses of power provide an understanding of how systemic power inequalities are shaped and maintained, entrenched and refined. Naila Kabeer explains: "power to" is the ability to make or withhold decisions, "power over" is the ability to define and institutionalize the decision-making agenda, and "power within" is the ability to recognize and overcome internalized and unconscious perceptions that the status quo is the only option even when it is not in one's interest to maintain it (cited in 1994, pp. 224-227). Jo Rowlands describes a fourth kind of power: "power with" is derived from identifying and acting with a group (cited in 1997, p. 13). Unlike Foucault's understanding of power as purely relational, a feminist understanding of power includes "power within", which necessitates analysis and "understanding of how internalized oppression creates barriers to women's exercise of power, thereby contributing to the

maintenance of inequality...” (Rowlands, 1997, p. 13). My investigation is built around feminist analyses of power because my research focuses on the relationships and power dynamics between diverse younger and older women within a national women’s organization.

Second a national women’s non-governmental organization (NGO) working on human rights has been deliberately chosen as the research site, despite shifts within the fields of critical development and critical human rights away from formal organizations as sites of resistance and toward independent social movements and grassroots groups (Alvarez, 2009; Conway, 2007). The turn away from organizations is, at least in part, attributable to rampant power inequalities among women within organizations (Ashcraft, 2001) as well as the frequent adoption of donor priorities and depoliticization of organizations through the process of NGO-ization² (Alvarez, 2009). I have deliberately chosen a women’s organization as the research site because NGOs are increasingly recognized by states as legitimate autonomous subjects and representatives of civil society constituencies (Alvarez, 2009; Sending & Neumann, 2006). In other words NGOs have power and voice within states, and increasingly within international policy processes, to influence change. Within increasingly hierarchical national and global policy spaces, women’s NGOs can potentially create space for grassroots women, young women and girls to inform law as well as social and economic policy. Further, women’s organizations engaged in community-level development and human rights work are uniquely situated to build the capacity of diverse women, young women and girls to influence community-level, national and international law and policy.

Third, I centralize the generational or age aspect of intersectionality while also considering the impacts of class, ethnicity and disability. In this study, generation is defined as

² NGO-ization can be defined as the process of professionalizing community-based groups, leaving them beholden to donors and funders who may not, and indeed often do not, share the priorities and concerns of local constituencies (Alvarez, 2009).

My study grew out of personal experiences of empowerment and disempowerment based on age and conscious identification as a “young woman”. I am interested in leadership models within women’s organizations that allow, or even facilitate, shared power and leadership with diverse young women. Feminist literature, replete with critiques of the invisibilization the gender aspect of intersectionality, is virtually silent on generational inequalities. Further, within the field of development, gender and age are not used as complimentary frames of analysis but maintained as distinct and separate areas to the detriment of girls and young women. Croll (2006) explains that gender and development focuses on gender while children and development focuses on age, with the result that the unique experiences of girls (and by extension young women) are largely invisible. This leads to a lack of understanding of the power dynamics among women, young women and girls, including the fact that the interests of different generations might actually conflict (Whittier, 1995; McDaniel, 2002; Croll, 2006). It also silences young women’s voices in the process of generating solutions to development challenges and rights violations. A focus on generation or age opens the possibility to explore intergenerational power dynamics, while attention to other aspects of intersectional identities highlights the differences in experience of groups in the same generation but different locations in local and global economic, social and power structures (Mannheim, 1964). Acknowledging young women as a constituency is the first step in opening space for young women to articulate their priorities and impact development and rights fulfillment.

In addition these three key concepts, I draw from different analytical ideas to inform my investigation. First, I focus on young women’s experiences of power and leadership in women’s organizations for three reasons. The first is my personal experience with intergenerational power dynamics in women’s organizations. The second is that outside of the experiences of feminists in

the academy, intergenerational power dynamics among women in organizations feature very little in academic literature. Third young women are a critical component of the constituencies of women's organizations, including women's organizations working on human rights. Globally 44% of the population is under the age of twenty-five³, while in the Global South that figure jumps to 87%⁴ of the population. In order respond to Mutua's (2009) call for human rights organizations to be accountable to their constituencies, and have leadership representative of those constituencies, young women who reflect the diversity of women's organizations' constituencies must share in power and leadership.

It is worth noting that although I focus on relationships between women and young women, women's organizations are embedded in communities regulated by patriarchy and in global systems largely controlled by neo-liberal agendas. Relationships within organizations reflect gendered and patriarchal power dynamics, as people are products of the societies in which they grow up and live (Ashcraft & Pacanowsky, 1996; Fletcher, 1998; Ashcraft, 2001). Further, family, community and culture impact the choices and participation of staff and volunteers in organizations while, conversely, participation in women's organizations may support women and young women to make changes in their relationships with family and community (Meyerson & Kolb, 2000). It is not my intention to ignore these realities. I focus on women and young women because they form the constituencies of women's organizations.

Another set of analytical ideas on which I have drawn are rights-based approaches to development. Rights-based approaches attempt to make human rights a material reality in political and social realms in addition to legal processes (Gready, 2008, p. 738). According to Gready (2008), rights-based approaches offer development practice: (i) the conceptualization of

³ United Nations Population Fund, 2012, p. 47

⁴ <http://www.beyond2015.org/children-and-youth-working-group>

development as entitlements to indivisible rights, including economic and social rights, achieved and protected through accountability of the state and others; (ii) indirect (and direct) applications of law to realize structural change; (iii) an expanded understanding of human rights mandates as coming from national law and social justice principles in addition to international human rights treaties; (iv) deeper engagement with the state's role in development, including simultaneously building the capacity rights-holders to claim rights and of the state to fulfill rights; (v) extending accountability for rights to corporations, UN agencies, international financial institutions and NGOs; and (vi) challenging power through the participation and empowerment of rights-holders as well as advocacy. Rights-based approaches are particularly important to this study because they have the potential to support the fulfillment of young women's rights both within women's organizations, through extending accountability for rights to NGOs, and in young women's everyday lives. Below, I further discuss participation and the right to participation in public life, indirect and strategic uses of the legal framework of rights, and the indivisibility of rights.

Participation, along with equality and non-discrimination and accountability, is a core human rights principle centralized in rights-based approaches (AWID, 2002; Gready, 2008; Nash, 2011). The principle of participation affirms that people have the right to fully understand their rights and, as part of claiming their rights, to make decisions about issues that affect their lives, including within state and NGO power structures (Nash, 2011). The principle of participation is further supported through Article 7 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in the 187 countries that have ratified this convention (United Nations Treaty Collection, 2013). Article 7 protects women's right to participation in political and public life, which specifically includes "decision-making" in "women's organizations" (CEDAW Committee, 1997, paras 2, 5). Further Article 7 protects all

women's, including young women's, full and equal participation in non-governmental organizations, including in their membership and on their "executive boards" (CEDAW Committee, 1997, para 34; CEDAW Committee, 2010, para 18). While it is technically states that are legal parties to CEDAW, rights-based approaches highlight the accountability of women's (and other) NGOs as duty-holders (Gready, 2008).

I privilege the legal framework of rights specifically because rights-based approaches offer the potential for young women's indirect use of international human rights law to claim their right to participate in public life through membership and decision-making in women's organizations. This opens the potential for the indirect use of law to advocate for young women's participation in leadership and decision-making in families, communities, and countries; and in international systems. Sara Ahmed's (2006) "ethnography of texts" suggests that what texts are able to accomplish depends on how they are engaged. CEDAW and other international human rights treaties will only protect young women's rights, including the right to participation in public life, if they are used strategically by young women and others to hold duty-bearers to account. Indirect (and direct) uses of the legal framework of rights also support young women's rights fulfillment through the indivisibility of rights.

All human rights are indivisible, whether they are civil and political rights, such as the right to life, equality before the law and freedom of expression; economic, social and cultural rights, such as the rights to work, social security and education, or collective rights, such as the rights to development and self-determination, are indivisible, interrelated and interdependent. The improvement of one right facilitates advancement of the others. Likewise, the deprivation of one right adversely affects the others (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2013).

The indivisibility of rights means that all rights are equally important and all must be fully enjoyed for human rights to be fulfilled. Looking back, in that moment when I was sitting under the kitchen table listening to my Dad reject a hypothetical gay son, I see that one function

of the indivisibility of rights is to ensure that the rights of people with different intersectional identities are equally protected. As well, the indivisibility of rights equally protects young women's right to participation in public life among all other social, economic, cultural, civil and political rights.

The concept of indivisibility also links the legal framework of rights with the material reality of rights. In rights-based approaches, the processes to protect and achieve rights (having rights) and the outcome of rights fulfillment (enjoying rights) are equally important and interdependent upon one another (Sen, 2005; Cornwall & Molyneux, 2008; Gready, 2008). However, for women, young women and girls there is often a large gap between rights in theory and lived reality (Cornwall & Molyneux, 2008). For example while young women have the right to participation in public life, in practice they are often excluded from power and decision-making in women's organizations (Baumgadner & Richards, 2000; Wilson, 2005). In addition, young women's right to equality is undermined by their experiences as girls when disempowerment, "because of their age and gender, give[s] them a lesser voice in families, school and communities and diminish[es] their bargaining capacities and entitlements to family resources" (Croll, 2006, p. 1290). While this study highlights the opportunities that arise through strategic indirect use of law, it also investigates the possibility of rights-based approaches to support fulfillment of the rights women, young women and girls in their everyday lives. In other words, the privileging of innovative use of the legal framework of rights is not intended to negate or diminish the importance of the material reality of rights.

The above concepts provide a foundation for my exploration of how YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach supports the fulfillment of young women's rights both inside the organization and in everyday life. Chapter 2 examines the theoretical contexts

supporting and problematizing feminist rights-based approaches, arguing that these approaches have the potential to transform power and gender inequalities and fulfill the rights of women, young women and girls. Chapter 3 provides a condensed history of Solomon Islands, including changing women's and gender roles and the importance of women's organizations, as well as a brief history of YWCA Solomon Islands. It also posits that distortions in women's and gender roles due to missionary intervention, colonialism and neo-colonialism have created an environment in Solomon Islands that devalues traditional and women's leadership and allows increased violations of the rights of women, young women and girls.

Chapter 4 explores the strategies that comprise YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach, including challenges to full implementation, and how each contributes to the fulfillment of diverse women's rights inside and outside the YWCA. Chapter 5 considers the Rise Up! young women's leadership program as an example of a feminist rights-based approach in action, calls for the development of a new right to leadership, and details the Y Intergenerational Leadership? Framework as a resource that can be used by other women's organizations to implement their own feminist rights-based approaches. Chapter 6 concludes that this study contributes to the literature an exploration of the intersections of generational and gender inequalities. It also highlights the need for further research to support women's organizations to overcome challenges to full implementation of feminist rights-based approaches.

Before moving to Chapter 2, I will explain how the research site was chosen, the research methodology, and how my own positionality impacted this study.

Data Collection

After considerable research into potential research sites, two women's non-governmental organizations stood out as possibilities. I approached both about participating in the research, and both agreed. Thus, my original plan was to conduct multi-sited ethnography research at two women's organizations, one in Canada and one in Solomon Islands. Each had the advantage of reputedly being unique in its success at young women's leadership, but for very different reasons.

The Canadian organization is a very large women's organization with a budget in excess of \$20 million and over 350 staff. It might be assumed that such an organization would follow the norm of prioritizing the ability to leverage philanthropic funding as a key criteria for board membership. Instead, this organization takes pride in its stated commitment to young women's leadership and diversity and has a high percentage of young women board members aged thirty or under. I was keen to explore what had made this possible, and what strategies the organization employed to achieve such diverse board membership. Unfortunately during the research process this organization disclosed that it was concerned that some of the data collected might cause it to be viewed in an unfavourable light, and decided to withdraw from the study. Initially conceptualized as a research setback, this turn of events allowed deeper and richer engagement with YWCA Solomon Islands which ultimately strengthened this research.

The research site for this study is YWCA Solomon Islands, a small national women's organization based in the capital city of Honiara with a branch in Munda, Western Province. YWCA Solomon Islands was founded in 1975, shortly before Solomon Islands achieved independence in 1978, and is considered one of the key national women's organizations in Solomon Islands (Pollard, 2003). YWCA Solomon Islands has eighteen staff and a budget of

approximately \$220,000 (in Canadian dollars), and is governed by a volunteer board of directors (YWCA Solomon Islands, 2010). YWCA Solomon Islands is unique in its success with young women's leadership in a Pacific context because, in Pacific countries, elders are considered leaders and young people are expected to follow (Solomon Islands Government employee, personal communication, October 19, 2012). Yet YWCA Solomon Islands has achieved international recognition for its model of young women's and intergenerational leadership. YWCA Solomon Islands also stands out in the global YWCA movement, as only half of YWCAs are currently meeting or exceeding the 25% quota for young women's leadership⁵. In addition, since over 70% of the population of Solomon Islands is under the age of twenty-nine (World Bank Sydney, 2012a, p. 2) and 48% of the population is female (Pollard, 2006, p. 1), at nearly 34% of the population young women form a significant constituency for YWCA Solomon Islands. For these reasons, I decided that YWCA Solomon Islands was the perfect place to conduct my research.

My thesis research explored the questions: (1) (how) does YWCA Solomon Islands fulfill young women's right to participation in public life, including in decision-making, within the organization?; (2) how do diverse young women with different intersectional identities experience leadership and decision-making within YWCA Solomon Islands?; (3) (how) does the leadership model employed by YWCA Solomon Islands impact the material reality of young women's and women's everyday lives?; and (4) what can other women's organizations learn from YWCA Solomon Islands about developing and maintaining inclusive, enabling and rights-fulfilling spaces for young women? Mindful of Sen's (2005) emphasis on both process and opportunities, I wanted to investigate young women's and women's experiences of enjoying

⁵ According to self-assessment questionnaires completed by national YWCAs in 2010, approximately 50% have at least 25% young women aged 30 and under on their boards of directors (interview, World YWCA staff member, July 23, 2013). The number of young women in staff leadership positions across national YWCAs is unknown.

their human rights both inside of YWCA Solomon Islands and in their everyday lives, and whether YWCA Solomon Islands explicitly identified as employing a rights-based approach.

YWCA Solomon Islands seemed from the outside to meet the criteria delineated by both the World YWCA (Nash, 2011) and UNICEF (2003) for human rights-based approaches, including: (i) organizational impact includes the realization of rights, (ii) organizational outcomes include rights-holders actively claiming their rights and duty-bearers fulfilling their obligations, (iii) organizational outputs include leadership and advocacy⁶, (iv) participation is both a means and a goal, and (v) accountability to all stakeholders⁷. Further, in 2011 YWCA Solomon Islands was one of 104 national YWCAs from around the world that voted to endorse a World YWCA Strategic Framework that includes Women's Rights as one of three strategic pillars and calls for the implementation of a rights-based approach (World YWCA, 2011, p. 2).

I determined that I would approach my research question by fulfilling the following research objectives: (1) to document the relationship between rights-based approaches and organizational leadership, integration of young women leaders, and achievement of planned community human rights outcomes in YWCA Solomon Islands; (2) to focus on the power dynamics within and around the organization; (3) to document effective strategies in the integration of young women leaders; and (4) to suggest a framework for effective integration of young women leaders into other women's organizations.

As I had originally intended to use multi-sited ethnography as a methodology, I had to rethink how exactly I would go about investigating YWCA Solomon Islands' reputed success at young women's leadership. I decided that my research methodology would be feminist

⁶ Items (i), (ii) and (iii) are adapted from the "Guiding Tools and Principles for Understanding and Using the HRBA" powerpoint presentation that was compiled for the World YWCA by Consultant Liz Nash in 2011.

⁷ Items (iv) and (v) are adapted UNICEF's State of the World's Children Report 2004, Annex B: The Human Rights-Based Approach: Statement of Common Understanding.

ethnography (Stacey, 1988; Naples & Sachs, 2000; Lather, 2001). Taking to heart Stacey's (1988, p. 26) caution about "partially" feminist ethnography and "the inherent inequalities and the possibilities for relationships in the definition, study and representation of the Other," I committed to continuous critical reflection through the research process and began to think about issues I might face. How might my whiteness and Global Northness and privilegedness impact my relationships with Solomon Islanders in a country formerly colonized by Christian missionaries and the British and arguably currently colonized by Australia? How might my insider/outsider status (Naples & Sachs, 2000; Watts, 2006; Bhattacharya, 2007) impact my relationships with research participants in the YWCA, including in the ongoing informed consent process? What issues might arise during my residence at the YWCA hostel as a researcher, an ex-pat and a fellow YWCA member? What were the inherent inequalities in the upcoming research process and what possibilities for relationships could I imagine? What would be the limits of my knowing (Lather, 2001)?

I also wondered in what ways it would be possible to disrupt me/Other, researcher/researched, powerful/powerless binaries to negotiate knowledge production across and through multiple relationships. I committed to using "self-reflection about power to deepen ethnographic analysis" (Naples & Sachs, 2000, p. 195) and heighten my awareness of ethical questions. As well I decided to investigate my own standpoint, and that of research participants, as experience/identity, as ongoing products of dynamic communities, and as the sites where my research begins in order to "better reveal the multiplicity of perspectives along with the dynamic structural dimensions of the social, political, and economic environment" (Naples, 1998, p. 48 in Naples & Sachs, 2000, p. 198).

What I experienced during the research process was ongoing and deep reflection on how my interactions with research participants and community members were shaped by power. For example when I participated in developing the Solomon Islands NGO CEDAW Shadow Report, I was asked to write a small section on rights and same sex relationships. I prepared three paragraphs on the negative impacts on women's sexual orientation and gender identity rights of the Solomon Islands Government's failure to recognize same sex relationships in legislation or statistical data collection (Joint NGOs Group, 2012, p. 15). When this section was reviewed by all participating NGOs, there was significant debate which included some discriminatory statements (field notes, November 7, 2012). Although it was extremely difficult I sat quietly throughout the debate, aware that my participation would have shifted the power dynamics of the conversation and possibly resulted in a decision that did not represent consensus.

When I felt or observed that my identity as a white woman from the Global North impacted my relationships, I consciously spoke less, listened more and tried to reduce the space I occupied. If it seemed appropriate, I engaged people in conversations about internalized racism. For example, I asked why the term "blackbirding" rather than "people being enslaved" is used to describe the forced labour of Solomon Islanders in Queensland and Fiji from the 1870s to 1930s (Bennett, 1987). People responded in agreement that Solomon Islanders were enslaved, and that they had not thought about it in these terms before (personal communication, September 19, 2012).

Investigation of my own standpoint revealed my assumptions about what equality looks like in practice and how this, in turn, impacted my understanding of the interpersonal interactions I observed. For example, at first a young woman not speaking up when her leadership was undermined during a meeting seemed to indicate that she was silenced in that space. Later, I

learned from the young woman that in her experience it was far more effective to address the problem during informal conversations outside of formal meetings (personal communication, October 19, 2012). Throughout the study, I tried to consciously contextualize people's choices and decisions by deepening my understanding of people's standpoints and lived realities.

From September to December 2012 I spent 70 days at YWCA Solomon Islands, living in the YWCA hostel which is co-located with the administrative offices, conference room and kindergarten. The YWCA hostel offers 18 long-stay shared rooms for young women who travel to Honiara from other parts of Solomon Islands for work or study, as well as two transit rooms for international or temporary guests. While I was in Solomon Islands, I lived with over 30 young women who came to the YWCA from all nine provinces of Solomon Islands. I shared cooking and cleaning facilities, and spent many evenings in the communal kitchen learning about life in Solomon Islands and developing new friendships.

Each weekday, and many weekends as well, I walked through the courtyard to the administrative offices where I spent my day engaged in participant observation. In addition to observing the workings of the office, I visited the kindergarten, attended three staff and two board meetings, shadowed staff when they attended meetings and training in the community, participated as part of the YWCA Solomon Islands delegation in the development of the NGO Shadow Report to the CEDAW Committee, and volunteered whatever skills and knowledge I possessed to assist board and staff with any ongoing projects. As a volunteer, I helped revise draft human resources policies and write a new draft constitution, facilitated governance training, and gave input into the performance evaluation and salary scale development process. My philosophy was that if I was at YWCA Solomon Islands taking up limited space, and inevitably taking up limited resources as well, I wanted to balance the taking with some giving.

While at YWCA Solomon Islands, I spent seven days at YWCA Munda Branch in Western Province. I travelled to Munda with one YWCA staff member and a communications volunteer from New Zealand. We were welcomed into the home of the staff member's grandmother, just outside Munda, for the duration of our stay. It was an amazing experience to live in her home and be made to feel part her family, as well as to gain some small understanding of life outside Honiara. Although privileged relative to many Solomon Islanders, this family helped me to learn a tiny bit about the lived realities of the over 80% of Solomon Islanders who live in rural areas (Joint NGOs Group, 2012, p. 22). YWCA Munda Branch is also very different from the YWCA in Honiara. Located in a small house in Munda, this YWCA branch has two program staff and conducts outreach to young women over a wide rural area. While in Munda, I met three YWCA peer educators who were part of the Rise Up! program and attended three Rise Up! workshops, two on human rights and one on public speaking, facilitated by peer educators at local secondary schools.

Conscious of the history of colonialism and neo-colonialism in Solomon Islands, I did my best to learn Solomon Islands Pijin and develop an understanding of local customs and culture. Eager to learn from the young women and women around me, I listened carefully to people's stories, ideas, questions and concerns and tried to make sense of the ways in which my own observations and people's stories confirmed and contradicted one another. I hope that through patience, and a determination to be open to new ideas and perspectives, I have been able to recount a version of YWCA Solomon Islands which rings true for the young women and women I met in Solomon Islands. And I am grateful for the generosity of young women and women in sharing their lives and their stories. Although I have maintained strict confidentiality of research participants, the real people I met are in my heart forever.

During the time I was in Solomon Islands, I wrote participant observation field notes each day and interviewed five of nine board members, seven of eighteen staff, three hostel tenants, four peer educators, four members, and five partners, for a total of twenty-eight interviews. Each interview was guided by the same set of questions, listed in Appendix A. To select interview participants, I made a very short presentation about the research to YWCA Solomon Islands board and staff, each peer educator and member I was able to meet, hostel tenants I spoke with, and partners I met while I was in Solomon Islands. I interviewed every person who consented to participate in the interview process. All research participants, whether or not they participated in formal interviews, gave informed consent to participate in the research process (see the consent form in Appendix B). To find additional research participants, I used snowball sampling to connect with additional members, peer educators and partners. I also interviewed seven members of the wider global YWCA movement to gain perspective on the work of other YWCAs compared to the work of YWCA Solomon Islands. One of the interviews I conducted in Solomon Islands early in the research process, when I was not yet comfortable with Pijin, was conducted in Pijin with a YWCA member as interpreter. All other interviews were conducted in English with some words or ideas expressed in Pijin. I conducted one group interview with peer educators because they felt that it would be both more comfortable and easier to be together for the interview. In addition to formal interviews, I had numerous informal conversations with research participants which are cited in this study as “personal communication” as opposed to “interview”.

During this study, I used my personal experience as a Vice President of the World YWCA, and my knowledge of the goals and initiatives of the YWCA movement to contextualize my understanding of YWCA Solomon Islands. At times, this insider (to the YWCA) outsider (to

Solomon Islands) status was difficult to understand and manage. Sometimes I was introduced by members of YWCA Solomon Islands as Vice President of the World YWCA, although I had clearly communicated that I was in Solomon Islands as a student and that my purpose was to learn. I was asked to, and did, speak during the Week of Prayer service themed “Violence Will Not Have the Last Word” (World YWCA, 2012). I found myself often reminding people that they were the experts and I was there to learn about YWCA Solomon Islands’ work so that I could in turn share the learning with other women’s organizations. But I’m still only one me, and I know that my multiple identities relative to the research coloured my interactions. They also affect my standpoint and my understanding and analysis of the research data, as explored above.

While at YWCA Solomon Islands, for the purpose of triangulation (Seale, 1999), I read many of YWCA Solomon Islands’ historical documents. I was fortunate that the YWCA Solomon Islands history book, *Stori Blo YWCA* (Feary & Lai, 2012), was both finalized and launched while I was in Solomon Islands as I was able to build on the historical research done by the authors. I also read program manuals, evaluations and reports; funding applications and reports; policies; the constitution and bylaws; annual reports; board meeting minutes; the strategic plan; and many other organizational documents that helped me to understand YWCA Solomon Islands as an organization.

I feel that I have developed as thorough an understanding of YWCA Solomon Islands as is possible for an outsider in a relatively short period of time, and acknowledge the mediated nature of this partially feminist ethnography. My research captures the work of YWCA Solomon Islands in the later part of 2012, and does not address changes or developments in this dynamic organization since that time. I am grateful for the ongoing availability of research participants to read drafts, critique research findings, confirm permission for the use of particular quotes, check

facts, and provide encouragement. Thank you to every person who participated in this research. Although I collected and analyzed the data, and wrote this paper, I consider the research a joint achievement of YWCA Solomon Islands, research participants, and myself as researcher. I hope that this study is useful to YWCA Solomon Islands, to other women's organizations, and to young women around the world demanding their right to participate in public life and decision-making in women's organizations, in communities, and in national and global policy spaces.

Chapter 2: Feminist Rights-Based Approaches: A Theoretical Context

This paper asserts that YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach offers women's organizations a leadership model that supports the fulfillment of young women's rights both within the organization and in young women's everyday lives. Before exploring the work of YWCA Solomon Islands, it is important to understand the theoretical context and definition of feminist rights-based approaches. Gready explains that there is a difference between human rights approaches, which seek to operationalize international human rights law, and rights-based approaches which are diverse but have in common realization of human rights through the principles of "participation, accountability, equality and non-discrimination, transparency and empowerment" (2008, p. 736). In Chapter 1, I explain the value of rights-based approaches. Here I will begin with a discussion of human rights themselves, build toward rights-based approaches, and explain why feminist rights-based approaches offer the greatest potential to fulfill the rights of women, young women and girls.

Women's Right to Rights

In order to understand feminist rights-based approaches as models through which rights can be realized, and YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach in particular, it is important to first understand human rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (1948) includes in Article 1 the foundation of all international human rights law, stating: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights". Article 1 effectively guarantees equal rights to all human beings because all human beings are born possessing dignity which can never be given or taken away. All international human rights law builds upon Article 1 of the

UDHR⁸, enumerating human rights and elaborating state obligation to protect, respect and fulfill human rights. Article 2 of the UDHR elaborates that entitlement of rights is universal and “without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status”. Building upon the UDHR, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (1966) guarantees human rights to “economic and social development” (Pubantz, 2005, p. 1294). While the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (1966) guarantees civil and political rights. Article 3 of both ICESCR and ICCPR specifically ensures “the equal right of men and women” to fully enjoy all rights set forth in the conventions.

Although the UDHR, ICESCR and ICCPR guarantee a wide range of human rights, and although the rights therein are guaranteed to both women and men, all three fail to acknowledge or address the gendered dimensions of rights violations or of rights themselves (Charlesworth, 1994). This is especially problematic since “globally the largest group routinely regarded as less human are women” which is compounded by structural inequalities which inhibit the realization of rights of women (Drinkwater, 2009, p. 145). In other words, gender inequality means that women and men are prevented from having equal opportunities to enjoy their rights. In 1979 the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was adopted in recognition of widespread discrimination against women, with substantive equality rather than formal legal equality at its core (Mooki, Ozoemana & Hansungule, 2010).

Substantive equality in CEDAW includes both “equality of opportunity” to access a country’s resources and “equality of results” in rights fulfillment (IWRAW Asia Pacific, 2009, p. 4). Article 1 of CEDAW (1979) defines discrimination to mean “any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the

⁸ <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Pages/WhatareHumanRights.aspx>

recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women...on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field”. Moving beyond the formal legal equality guaranteed by earlier human rights treaties, CEDAW expressly identifies as discrimination laws, policies or practices that discriminate either in substance or application, as well as the absence of laws, policies or practices which are needed to respect, protect and fulfill women’s rights (Mooki, Ozoemana & Hansungule, 2010). Further, CEDAW Article 5 mandates State Parties to change all social and cultural practices which reinforce gender inequality or stereotyped gender roles.

The CEDAW Committee is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, to monitor State Party implementation of CEDAW in the 187 countries that have ratified the convention (United Nations Treaty Collection, 2013). Part of the CEDAW Committee’s role is making General Recommendations to clarify for States Parties the substance of CEDAW (Mooki, Ozoemana & Hansungule, 2010). *General Recommendation No. 23*⁹ (GR 23), issued in 1997, provides clarification on CEDAW Article 7 on women in political and public life. GR 23 states that political and public life “includes many aspects of civil society, including...women's organizations, community-based organizations and other organizations concerned with public and political life” (1997, para 5). While only States Parties that have ratified CEDAW are legally bound by the convention, rights-based approaches open accountability for rights fulfillment to women’s non-governmental organizations (Gready, 2008). *General Recommendation No. 28*¹⁰ (GR 28) addresses “intersecting forms of discrimination and their compounded negative impact on the women concerned” including discrimination based on “race, ethnicity, religion or belief, health, status, age, class, caste and sexual orientation and

⁹ <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/recomm.htm#recom23>

¹⁰ <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G10/472/60/PDF/G1047260.pdf?OpenElement>

gender identity” (CEDAW Committee, 2010, para 18). GR 28 specifically addresses discrimination against young women, and the differential discrimination experienced by diverse young women.

As a foundation for understanding feminist rights-based approaches, the above exploration of human rights explains that the gendered nature of rights, and many rights violations, necessitates specific attention to women’s rights. CEDAW, adopted by the United Nations in 1979, is the international human rights treaty that specifically enumerates women’s rights. In addition, CEDAW addresses the material reality of rights by mandating substantive equality.

Critiques of Human Rights

While CEDAW mandates substantive equality to address the gap between rights in theory and the lived realities of women, young women and girls, feminist rights-based approaches go further by actively supporting rights fulfillment. Despite guarantees of substantive equality in CEDAW, gender inequality persists in all societies (Ki-moon, 2010). Awareness of the weaknesses of contemporary human rights discourse and the human rights system is critical to developing rights-based approaches that actually lead to the achievement of rights. Both the human rights system and the human rights corpus have been critiqued as imperialist and dependent on states which cannot possibly fulfill human rights. Mutua asserts that the unyielding universalist human rights project engenders “legitimate charges of cultural imperialism...The forceful rejection of dialogue also leads to the inevitable conclusion that there is a hierarchy of cultures...This view legitimizes interventionism” (2002, p. 5). Rajagopal states that the “colonial legacy, statist and anti-tradition bias and economistic method” of human rights mean that while it is useful in some circumstances, it is not “a sole language of resistance and

emancipation for oppressed social majorities around the world” (2003, p. 232). While Grewal & Kaplan warn that human rights are used to justify the missionary model of “intervention and salvation” tied to an “us-and-them” conceptualization that elevates us-civilized-saviour above them-uncivilized-savage (1994, p. 18).

Grewal outlines how the global human rights project further undermines Global South states and peoples through the legitimization of “global citizens” (read “West”) as responsible for the welfare of people in undemocratic states (read “non-West”) unable to fulfill human rights nor protect the welfare and security of their populations (2005, p. 122). Grewal’s analysis asserts that “human rights evolved in the shadow of development to address its limitations and to ensure the continued authority of knowledge production by the “developed world” over the “developing world”” (2005, pp. 131-132). Grewal is particularly critical of the production of women outside the “West” as “objects of charity and care” (2005, p. 130) to be saved or fixed by women from the “West” through women’s NGOs. Part of this global project includes the delineation of which women’s issues become rights in the common or global agenda and which are cast aside.

Feminists critique rights as protecting “male values” and guaranteeing against “what men fear will happen to them” rather addressing the harms most prevalent in the experiences of women (Charlesworth & Chinkin, 1993, pp. 68-70). For example, the right to life “does not address the ways in which being a woman is in itself life-threatening” (Charlesworth & Chinkin, 1993, p. 70). Human rights discourse is criticized by many feminists for further institutionalizing the gendered public-private dichotomy, leading to the failure of human rights to address diverse women’s lived realities (Binion, 1995). This is both a critique that human rights fails to address rights violations within the family, as well as an emphasis on the limitation of state accountability for rights violations (Binion, 1995). As such, human rights are seen to fall short of

including freedom from violence and the right to bodily integrity (Nussbaum, 2000; Cornwall & Molyneux, 2008), lacking protection against such violations as high infant and child mortality among girls and intimate partner violence (Charlesworth & Chinkin, 1993; Binion, 1995).

Another critique is that many states, especially those in the Global South, have been weakened through globalization of the neo-liberal economic agenda and it may be unrealistic to expect them to have the capacity to respect, protect and fulfill all human rights (Hickey & Mitlin, 2009). An alternative interpretation is that a legacy of colonialism and neo-colonialism has prevented some states in the Global South from developing robust economic and political systems that could effectively support the fulfillment of human rights (Dinnen, 2002). This analysis sees the global human rights project as demonizing Global South states as the ultimate Other, victims of a rhetoric of perpetual failure at neo-liberal statehood including protection of even the most “basic” human rights (Dzodzi, 2007).

To address feminist critiques of human rights law, the CEDAW Committee has clarified through *General Recommendation No. 19*¹¹ (GR 19) (1992) that gender-based violence constitutes discrimination and as such women’s right to freedom from violence is protected by CEDAW. GR 19 also recognizes the indivisibility and interdependence of the right to freedom from violence with women’s other rights including life, security of the person, equal legal protection, equality within the family, and health (CEDAW Committee, 1992, para 7).

To address charges of imperialism, Mutua asserts that it is possible to create a “multicultural human rights corpus” through the participation of many cultures in its development rather than privileging the “European West” (2002, p. 8). The progressive or expanding nature of human rights opens this possibility, as peoples’ movements use rights-based approaches to expand both the definition of existing rights and to define new rights which are

¹¹ <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/recomm.htm#recom19>

then enshrined in human rights treaties (Stammers, 1999). One example is the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities¹², adopted in 2007, and another is ongoing work to build on the 2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples¹³ by developing a convention on indigenous peoples' rights.

In addition, Kothari & Sheth imagine a revised human rights “social praxis, rooted in the need of the most oppressed communities, that aims to create shared norms of civilized existence...a shared vision of how we want to live as a collectivity that can provide us the moral basis for evolving our own conduct” (as cited in Falk, 2008, p. 36). This echoes Mutua’s (2002) call for the co-construction of a multicultural human rights corpus. Fischlin & Nandorfy further posit human rights as existing as much in the relationships between individuals and groups as in individuals themselves, calling for “a more expansive notion of rights,” which includes both individual and community rights, built upon the reality that all peoples and their environments are deeply interconnected (2012, p. 90). Such measures and possibilities do not eliminate the deepest flaws of human rights, but they do leave the door open for rights-based approaches to effect change.

Rights-Based Approaches: Process & Opportunity

While I do not embrace the entirety of the global human rights system, and understand that human rights have been conceived and are used to the benefit of men over women and the Global North over the Global South, I do believe that feminist rights-based approaches based on the principles of equality, non-discrimination, participation and accountability can be effective tools to support the rights fulfillment of women, young women and girls. Chapter 1 explained that rights-based approaches to development are part of the expanding nature of human rights,

¹² http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CRPD/CRPD_ENG.pdf

¹³ <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/512/07/PDF/N0651207.pdf?OpenElement>

reconceptualising development as a right and employing international human rights law and social justice principles in strategic and creative ways to ensure rights in law as well as social, economic and political life (Gready, 2008).

The potential of rights-based approaches to lead to greater enjoyment of rights is elaborated by Sen's (2005) analysis of *Human Rights and Human Capabilities*. Sen asserts that 'capability', defined as "the opportunity to achieve valuable combinations of human functions – what a person is able to do or be", facilitates understanding of 'opportunity', a person's ability to actually do what she chooses (2005, p. 153). So although people theoretically have the same human rights as one another, they may have different opportunity to exercise or enjoy those rights. This supports feminist critiques that gender inequality means that women have fewer opportunities to enjoy their rights. It also supports Croll's (2006) assertion that gender and generational inequalities combine to further disadvantage girls (and, logically, young women).

Sen also argues that the "freedom to have" includes both 'process' and 'opportunity' (2005, p. 155). With this argument, he underscores the importance of both the existence of "fair processes" and people's practical ability to employ them (Sen, 2005, p. 157). In other words, it is equally important that people have access to choice; liberty; equality before the law; laws that protect human rights; and mechanisms that support the fulfillment of human rights, as it is for all people to have the opportunity to fully enjoy their rights. One example of 'process' is the Temporary Special Measures and concomitant budget recently approved by Cabinet in Solomon Islands as a first step toward legislation that will reserve seats in Parliament for women (UN Women Pacific, 2013). An example of 'opportunity' is the participation of a young woman from YWCA Solomon Islands as one of the two youth representatives in the Solomon Islands Federal Constitution drafting process (personal communication, September 19, 2012).

Sen's (2005) emphasis on the importance of maintaining space for the precise capabilities to be determined based on each situation and the realities of the people involved, and of avoiding the development of a closed list of capabilities, may sound like a rejection of the human rights corpus. However, Sen asserts that capabilities and human rights are compatible and that "the viability and universality of human rights and of an acceptable specification of capabilities are dependent on their ability to survive critical scrutiny in public reasoning" (2005, p. 163). The fact that human rights are progressive, in the sense that the body of human rights continues to grow without eliminating rights that already exist, meets Sen's threshold of an open list. The fact that human rights have, for the most part, survived public scrutiny meets Sen's test for viability and universality.

Sen's insistence on both 'process' and 'opportunity' mandates that any assessment of the effectiveness of rights-based approaches include investigation of whether they allow people to actually do and be what they set out to do and be. In other words, evaluating the merit or success of rights-based approaches necessarily includes questions about whether people are able to claim and enjoy their rights, and whether their material reality has changed or improved as a result. Sen's (2005) work informed my investigation of YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach, compelling me to evaluate whether or not it has increased the fulfilment of rights.

Critical Analysis of Rights-Based Approaches

An understanding of common criticisms of rights-based approaches is necessary to the development of feminist rights-based approaches with the potential to fulfill rights, both inside women's organizations and in everyday life. Critiques of rights-based approaches come from a wide range of fields including feminisms, critical development and critical human rights. They include assertions that rights-based approaches are unable to transform power inequalities nor

achieve gender equality. Hickey & Mitlin (2009) argue that the rights-based approach terminology was adopted to describe multiple methods for incorporating rights and development without critical analysis of the pros and cons. Rights-based approaches have been accused of further entrenching the hegemony of the Global North, enshrining the priorities of donors over constituencies, and using the name rights-based to forestall evaluations of actual effectiveness at achieving rights (Hickey & Mitlin, 2009).

One line of critical inquiry questions the relationship between challenging unequal power relations and rights-based approaches. Since human rights are international legal norms, with states implicated as duty-bearers, the possibility for radical systemic change from within the system comes into question. Kothari posits that the very act of bringing “those people who have the greatest reason to challenge and confront power relations and structures” inside development leads to “inclusionary control and the inducement of conformity” (2001, pp. 142-143). In my research, I have prioritized exploring how YWCA Solomon Islands negotiates the tension between the goal of shared power and the reality in many development initiatives of “inducement to conformity,” especially since the global YWCA movement has a history of missionary work and charity approaches (Seymour-Jones, 1994).

A second critique concerns implementation of the human rights principle of participation, and whether it is possible for those most vulnerable to rights violations to participate as equals in rights organizations and policy decisions. Cleaver (2001) critiques participation as a management exercise that focuses on projects while failing to transform institutions and organizations, ignoring existing and entrenched power dynamics among participants, and confusing participation in development projects with social inclusion. Mohan raises the issue of irrevocably otherizing those who are invited to participate through “‘primitivist’ discourse” (2001, p. 159).

Similarly, the notion of “community” of participants is critiqued as unproblematized and homogenizing, which “carries connotations of consensus and “needs” determined within parameters set by outsiders” (Nelson & Wright, 1995, p. 15 in Mohan, 2001, p. 160). Kothari (2001) highlights that the failure of many participatory approaches is a failure to acknowledge “power within” as a critical aspect of empowerment through participation:

So power is everywhere, and can be particularly analyzed through the creation of social norms or customs that are practiced throughout society...All individuals are vehicles of power...However, the creation of dichotomies of power within participatory discourse (the haves and the have-nots) allows the revealing of power not as a social and political discourse or as embodied practice, but only as manifest in material realities. Thus participatory approaches can unearth who gets what, when and where, but not necessarily the processes by which this happens or the ways in which the knowledge produced through participatory techniques is a normalized one that reflects and articulates wider power relations in society (Kothari, 2001, p. 141).

A third critique parallels criticisms of human rights, claiming that rights-based approaches are unable to effectively address gender equality because of their basis in international law. Bradshaw explains that women’s movements and organizations in Nicaragua use gender analysis to address “those factors that lead to rights non-compliance rather than seeking compliance with a set of rights” (2006, p. 1339). In Bradshaw’s study, rights are seen as having limited potential to achieve gender equality because they are seen as unable to address inequalities of power. Further, Dzodzi cautions that gender activists may embrace rights-based approaches because of particular interpretations of their meaning and potential, naming “the myth that RBA will deliver gender equality and development” (2004, p. 133).

Key critiques of rights-based approaches call into question the possibility of such approaches to transform power, fully implement the human rights principle of participation and achieve gender equality. Feminisms offer rights-based approaches strategies to overcome these barriers to rights fulfillment.

What Feminisms Offer Rights-Based Approaches

Feminisms highlight the need for rights-based approaches to achieve the equality of women, young women and girls by transforming the systems and structures of power that maintain and reinforce gender and other intersecting inequalities. Addressing inequality in women's organizations and movements, feminist critiques of power emphasize the imperative of both analyzing and sharing power within organizations. Sen and Grown identify as a critical challenge, "our ability and willingness to share power within our own organizations" (1987, p. 95). This requires particular attention to the human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination, participation and empowerment in order to avoid discriminating against any individual or group of women in membership, planning, programming, policy development, governance, leadership or monitoring and evaluation.

Entrenched gender inequalities operate such that "power to" and "power over" are most often exercised by men at the expense of women and trans persons, and most enjoyed by those closest to the centre of the hegemony (read: white, Global North, financially secure). However, many women who have gained formal positions of power also exercise this power in ways that reinforce hegemony (Batliwala & Dhanraj, 2007), as my personal experience recounted in Chapter 1 confirms. This is as true within women's movements and organizations as elsewhere. Feminist scholars of colour from the Global North and South (Davis, 1981; hooks, 1981 & 1989; Mohanty, 1988), among others, have been extremely critical of who leads and who holds power in feminist practice – in other words: who is empowered by whom. bell hooks' writing raises the critical point that gender inequalities are complexified and shaped by inequalities of ethnicity, class, age, North-South, sexual orientation, gender identity and countless additional aspects of intersectional identities and experiences:

Resolution of the conflict between black and white women cannot begin until all women acknowledge that a feminist movement which is both racist and classist is a mere sham, a cover-up for women's continued bondage to materialist patriarchal principles, and passive acceptance of the status quo...Sisterhood cannot be forged by the mere saying of words. It is the outcome of continued growth and change. It is a goal to be reached, a process of becoming. The process begins with action..." (hooks, 1981, p. 157).

Mohanty (1988) critiques feminist scholarship and practice for the strategic codification of hierarchical relationships between those belonging to the power elite and the Other, including the invisibilization of who can and cannot access power and how that power is used to define feminist subjects, the Other, and the *common* (emphasis mine) feminist agenda. While Batliwala and Dhanraj's research demonstrates that women do not necessarily engage with power in ways that enhance gender equality and warns against the invalid assumption that:

a critical mass of women in political institutions would transform the very *nature of power* and the *practice of politics* through values of cooperation and collaboration, holding power in trusteeship (power on behalf of, not over) and acting with greater transparency, honesty and public accountability (2007, p. 27).

These critiques of power highlight the importance of standpoint theory, which begins with lived realities and sees people as experts on their own lives and experiences (Harding, 1991; Smith, 2000). Collins explains that people on the margins have "a clearer view of oppression than other groups who occupy more contradictory positions vis-à-vis white male power" (1986, p. S15). In other words, the standpoints of people on the margins provide critical insight into relations of power. For example, Collins states that as a group Black women share "certain commonalities of perception" including an understanding of "interlocking oppressions" while at the same time Black women's diversity shapes different lived experiences (1986, p. S16, S19). Thus groups that share grounds of identity may also share particular standpoints, and those groups most marginalized see most clearly how power operates to maintain hierarchies. People on the margins are so often silenced by dominant narratives, there is little opportunity to learn

from their standpoints. Collins explains how this has happened to Black women within feminist movements:

Black women's absence from organized feminist movements has mistakenly been attributed to a lack of feminist consciousness. In actuality, Black feminists have possessed an ideological commitment to addressing interlocking oppression yet have been excluded from arenas that would have allowed them to do so (1986, p. S19).

Largely absent from the robust body of feminist literature on power (Davis, 1981; hooks, 1989; Butler, 1990; Hartsock, 1991; Kabeer, 1994; Rowlands, 1997) are critiques of intergenerational power dynamics among women and within women's organizations. Critical and feminist analyses of power in organizations (Calás & Smircich, 1996; Thomas & Davies, 2005; Jones & Munro, 2005) offer an understanding of women's organizations as a location of power dynamics between young and older/established leaders, as well as of power dynamics around race/ethnicity, gender and class (Bell, 1990; Calás & Smircich, 1992; Nkomo, 1992; Fellows & Razack, 1998; Aaltio & Mills, 2002). However, this literature does not chronicle young women's experiences of power in women's organizations.

The diverse voices within third wave and young feminisms (Walker, 1995; Gillis, Howie & Munford, 2004; Springer, 2002; Harris, 2004; Reger, 2005; Dahl-Crossley, 2010) offer an understanding of young women's leadership and engagement with power. Springer notes that "the wave model perpetuates the exclusion of women of color from women's movement history and feminist theorizing" by invisibilizing activism for gender and race equality by women of colour that falls outside the accepted timelines (2002, p. 1063). While documenting feminist history using the waves metaphor is in many ways controversial (Roth, 2004; Springer, 2002; Reger, 2005; Laughlin, Gallagher, Cobble & Boris, 2010), I deliberately use the language "third wave and young feminist" to describe the intersectionalist thinking and activism of today's young feminists (Gillis et al, 2004; Purvis, 2004; Reger, 2005; Crawford, 2007). While it is

difficult to identify a particular group as third wave and young feminists, as many eschew the label “feminist” (Gillis et al, 2004; Reger, 2005; Dahl Crossley, 2010), I refer here to contemporary young women engaged in activity that could be considered feminist. This identification is made for the purpose of defining a body of theory, and is not meant to disrespect young women’s power to determine individual and collective identity. Rebecca Walker states of third wave feminists, “we find that the nexuses of power and identity are constantly shifting, and so are we” (2004, p. xiv).

Baumgardner & Richards liken intergenerational power dynamics to “a male-female relationship...young women get the coffee, make the copies, and wait to be discovered – or, at least, thanked – by their superiors” (2000, p. 222). This recreation of patriarchal power dynamics inside women’s organizations and movements it is all too common an experience. Mishra & Singh assert that “[w]hile in principle feminist organizations aspire to [fight against all types of abuse of power and oppression], in reality...most feminist organizations have a matriarch who seeks control over the organization...and their management structures often play power games with subordinates which run counter to the ideals of feminist thinking...” (2007, pp. 38-39). Baumgardner & Richards go even further, asserting that young women are sometimes excluded from women’s organizations specifically to avoid power-sharing:

Young women have too few opportunities for leadership. Subconsciously or not, Second Wave often deny that they could benefit from younger feminists’ knowledge and experiences. Instead, they focus on little girls – sweet, young, and as unthreatening to the Second Wave way of doing things as possible – as a not so subtle way of avoiding and ignoring the generation of young-*adult* feminists...One addendum to the “I am not a feminist but...” could be “I would be if older women would recognized that I am” (2000, pp. 222-223).

This way of thinking is reminiscent of the international development complex’s focus on girls. For example, the Nike Foundation asserts that girls “play a crucial role in solving the most

persistent problems facing the world today” (Nike Foundation The Girl Effect, 2013). Safe, unthreatening girls who will not challenge the international development complex’s hegemonic power over peoples, communities and even governments in the Global South are held up as the key to solving global development challenges. We have moved from women in development to gender and development to the girl child, to some extent effectively depoliticizing development discourse. A focus on girls in development skirts the complexities of achieving gender equality, just as a focus on girls and girlhood studies effectively moves feminist discourse out of Purvis’ (2004) “third space” in which dialogue and power-sharing is imperative and into a fourth space where the experts can settle back comfortably into their roles. As Lynnsay Rongokea asks, “how can we say that we defend women’s rights when we do not even defend the rights of women within our own organizations?” (in Horn, 2009, p. 151). Horn writes of Sanushka Mudlair’s suggested solutions:

Sanushka Mudlair, a feminist activist based in the Asia-Pacific region, spoke about the ways in which age operates as one axis of power relations in women’s movements. She pointed out that these power relations often manifest in seemingly benign myths around what ‘older and younger’ women can contribute and are interested in. In her words, ‘the danger of these myths is that they discourage us from sharing power between generations and lead to pockets of activism involving different generations that are not connected to each other. Many young women for example, find that they are operating in their own silo of activism rather than as an integral part of the movement’. She also reflected on the fact that the inter-generational agenda often becomes a question of young women being invited in to spaces already defined by older feminists, rather than being a part of shaping the spaces and agendas from the onset. Mudlair suggested a move away from unhelpful binaries and towards a more nuanced understanding of inter-generational solidarity, built on a shared power to define, prioritize and act across generations of feminist activists (Horn, 2009, p. 151).

Carrying my own dichotomized experiences of empowerment as a volunteer within the YWCA movement vs. profound disempowerment in my job in a Canadian national women’s organization, I was eager to investigate what has been written about intergenerational power dynamics in women’s movements and organizations. My investigation revealed the same duality

in the small body of literature on intergenerational feminisms. Some young women write of empowerment, mentorship and space to thrive in intergenerational organizations and movements (Purvis, 2004; Springer, 2002). Others write of both positive and negative experiences of intergenerational power dynamics (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000; Horn, 2009). While some write of nearly irreconcilable differences in perspectives and politics within power dynamics that privilege older, established women at the expense of young women (Joshi, 2005; Plyler, 2005).

Springer (2002), Joshi (2005) and Williams & Konsmo (2011) engage critical dialogue about how culture and ethnicity impact intergenerational experiences, and are further complexified by class and histories of colonialism. For example, Williams & Konsmo state that rather than buying into colonial notions of progress, “for us, as a community, [gender equality] simply means a return to our Indigenous ways of life, a decolonization of our communities which will bring back gender equality” (2011, p. 28).

“Intersectional identities” can be understood as compound identities made up of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and multiple other “grounds of identity” (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1243, 1245). While it is important not to essentialize identity – for example, to assume that all woman-identified persons experience the world in the same way – it is useful to think about how belonging to particular groups in particular times and places shapes one’s lived experience. The values society attributes to particular groups, and the development and maintenance of hierarchies based on those values, highlight the ways power operates in and around identity (Crenshaw, 1991). Power shapes the dominant narratives of the lived experiences of different groups or grounds of identity, silencing those on the margins. While intersectionality as a theory has been critiqued for lack of clarity on whether its application is limited to analysis of “marginalized subjectivity”, as well as whether it effectively articulates the relationship between

intersecting oppressions and identity, it has also been acknowledged as “the primary theoretical tool designed to combat feminist hierarchy, hegemony, and exclusivity (Nash, 2008, p. 2).

Paying attention to intersectional identities, and creating space in which people can tell the stories of their lived experiences, disrupts dominant narratives and opens opportunities for dialogue and action. Crenshaw explains:

With identity thus reconceptualized, it may be easier to understand the need for and to summon the courage to challenge groups that are after all, in one sense, "home" to us, in the name of the parts of us that are not made at home. This takes a great deal of energy and arouses intense anxiety. The most one could expect is that we will dare to speak against internal exclusions and marginalizations, that we might call attention to how the identity of "the group" has been centered on the intersectional identities of a few... Through an awareness of intersectionality, we can better acknowledge and ground the differences among us and negotiate the means by which these differences will find expression in constructing group politics (1991, p. 1299).

Listening to the stories and lived experiences of young women, and learning from young women's diverse intersectional identities, thus gives women's movements and organizations opportunities to learn about the priorities of young women. Further dialogue can create opportunities to integrate young women's priorities into organizational priorities, ensuring that women's organizations are responsive to young women as a key constituency. Plyler (2005) raises the important point that sharing power between older and younger women in movements and organizations necessarily includes responding to and supporting the priorities of young women and calls for respect and solidarity with young women:

In the long run, our ability to dismantle inequality and challenge injustice will depend on our collective ability to confront oppression in all its forms. For older feminists, supporting young women does not only mean making space for them in already existing organizations and movements, nor does it only include efforts to mentor or share knowledge and experience (although these things are both essential and appreciated). Solidarity with young women activists also means giving time, energy and support to the initiative and actions *they* are leading – whether they are taking place in local community centres, on campuses or in the streets. The ability of feminist organizations to remain relevant to social change will depend on their efforts to support this vital work. Only when the visions, perspectives and leadership of young women are given respect and

solidarity will we be able to create movements that are truly transformative (2005, p. 148).

And there is still the question of the relative importance of identifying as feminist in the first place; an identity which is increasingly professionalized and rigidly defined (Walker, 1995; Wilson, 2005). While some young women feel alienated from feminisms that do not create space for their intersectional identities or the priorities that arise from solidarity with particular communities, others assert the danger of openly identifying as feminist “in an era of increased militarization and fundamentalisms” (Wilson, 2005, p. 227). Wilson asks the question:

How do we internalize the politics we advocate for in the world out there as feminists and as movements? If the basic tenet of feminism is to deconstruct power, and to propose alternative paradigms for power sharing, feminism has been concerned with redefining democratic communities on more participatory grounds. In all honesty, though, how have we fared in this regard? How have we dealt with issues of power (2005, p. 226)?

Wilson (2005) is questioning the ability of feminist movements and organizations to practice their values, while at the same time prompting her readers to think about the benefits of power-sharing. Why is it important that young women participate? Wilson (2005) cites movement responsiveness and regeneration, holding movements accountable, and strengthening and sustaining movements as benefits of young women’s participation and leadership. Baumgardner & Richards celebrate older feminists who work in this way, who “are rewarded by young women’s energy and accomplishments, not threatened” and who recognize that “young women are a distinct arm of the movement and can’t be rendered invisible by the labels “women” and “girls”” (2000, p. 231).

The small body of scholarship on feminist leadership offers insights into the ways in which leaders can use their power to foster equality and social justice. Lau Chin argues that for women and feminist leaders “the objectives of leadership include empowering others” (2007, p. 15). Alpizar Durán, Payne & Russo (2007, p. 5) contribute thinking about the importance of

“ensuring participation through inclusive or democratic decision-making processes and mechanisms” within women’s organizations as well the importance of building collective power to challenge the external contexts of social injustice within which women’s organizations operate.

Feminisms offer rights-based approaches explorations and analyses of the ways in which power shapes relationships among diverse women, as well as between women and the societies in which we live. Feminisms highlight the importance of attention to standpoint, differential experiences shaped by diverse intersectional identities, and women’s organizations as sites of power. Within feminist rights-based approaches, this translates into strategies that ensure diverse women and girls participate in decision-making in all aspects of their lives, have access and exercise power to claim their rights, and are part of transforming inequalities to make equality a reality. In addition, suggested strategies for organizations include responding to young women’s priorities, respect for and solidarity with young women, understanding shared power with young women as strengthening and sustaining movements, democratic decision-making, and using shared power to challenge social injustice.

Feminist Rights-Based Approaches

At their core, feminist rights-based approaches seek to transform power and gender inequalities and achieve substantive equality inside organizations and institutions as well as in communities, countries and international systems. Feminist rights-based approaches offer three interdependent strategies to make rights fulfillment possible: (i) participation of diverse women, young women and girls as both a means and an end, which includes shared power within organizations, (ii) empowerment of women, young women and girls to know and claim their rights both within organizations and in their everyday lives, and (iii) critical engagement with

systems and structures that reinforce and maintain power and gender inequalities such as religion, tradition and patriarchy.

The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) defines a rights-based approach to development as “both a vision and a set of tools: human rights can be the *means*, the *ends*, the mechanism of *evaluation*, and the central *focus* of sustainable human development” (AWID, 2002, p. 1, emphasis in original). Through this definition, AWID addresses critics of rights-based approaches who assert that such approaches focus on the means to the exclusion of the ends (in other words initiatives that are inclusive and participatory but do not actually achieve greater enjoyment of human rights by community members) and those who assert that such approaches focus on the ends without regard for the means (in other words, initiatives that lead to greater fulfillment of community members' human rights while themselves being top-down and exclusionary). By focusing on accountability to human rights principles at all stages of development, AWID holds governments and NGOs alike to account for operationalizing human rights in the genesis, planning, implementation, evaluation and revision of development initiatives.

World YWCA specifies its rights-based approach as a set of strategies to empower women, young women and girls to know and claim their rights through implementation of the human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination, participation and accountability. This includes ensuring that community members and program participants know and have the capacity to claim their rights, and ensuring that people most vulnerable to rights violations actively participate in decision-making about the issues that affect their lives. The first three actions of the World YWCA's rights-based approach are:

(1) Working with marginalized or disadvantaged populations. Such key target populations for the YWCA are those women, young women and girls who face a higher

risk of human rights violations, are marginalized in society, and vulnerable to discrimination in terms of accessing services and opportunities. I.e. women living with HIV, survivors of violence, women with disabilities, out-of-school girls, rural women, migrant workers, older women, etc. **(HR Principle of Equality and Non-discrimination)**

(2) Ensuring active and meaningful participation of all relevant groups with special emphasis on the key target population. Whereby project/programme planning, decision-making, monitoring and evaluating becomes a shared endeavor. **(HR Principle of Participation)**

(3) Capacity building of participants to know and claim their rights. Whereby skills building and knowledge supports transformative capacities such as leadership and advocacy. **(HR Principle of Participation)** (Nash, 2011, p. 6).

The World YWCA's rights-based approach also addresses the human rights principle of accountability. This includes: "creating and supporting a relationship between rights holders and duty bearers [to help] give a voice to more marginalized groups to ensure their rights are respected" as well as "identifying the root causes of discrimination and changing harmful behaviours and norms" (Nash, 2011, p. 7). For the World YWCA, accountability includes both shared power, leadership and decision-making within YWCAs as organizations as well as ensuring rights fulfillment in everyday life by changing behaviours, norms, systems and structures that perpetuate rights violations and power and gender inequalities. The World YWCA's rights-based approach changes the material reality of people in communities and constituencies by ensuring greater enjoyment of their rights, addressing Sen's (2005) process and opportunity.

It is important to note that the World YWCA's rights-based approach is based on the idea that women's organizations have an obligation not only to advocate for women's rights with government and implement programs that support women in communities to know and claim their rights, but to ensure that human rights principles are applied internally within organizations (Nash, 2011). In this case applying human rights principles internally includes participation by

“all relevant groups” including “those women, young women and girls who face a higher risk of human rights violations” (Nash, 2011, p. 6), paralleling the CEDAW Committee’s understanding of the impacts of different intersectional identities on rights fulfillment (2010, para 18).

Many scholars see the potential of rights-based approaches to fulfill rights, and even view them as a critical component of development practice (Sen, 1999; Alston, 2005; Cecchini & Notti, 2011) including addressing inequalities of power (Darrow & Tomas, 2005; Gready, 2008). Feminist rights-based approaches have the potential to transform power because they include active and ongoing accountability to rights-bearers (Cornwall & Nyamu-Musembi, 2006). For women and young women as rights-bearers in organizations, this includes empowerment; participation in development decision-making; involvement in planning, implementation and evaluation of programs; and transparency and accountability of budgets and funding. In other words, feminist rights-based approaches include shared power and leadership.

Kabeer (1994) explains “empowerment” as the process of realizing “power within”, “power with”, and “power to”. Important to the “power to” within empowerment is the concept of “agency”, making and taking action on one’s own decisions (Kabeer, 2005, p. 14). In feminist rights-based approaches, participation as an end leads to empowered women, young women and girls as agents of transformative change in their communities, nations and in global policy spaces. This is captured by Mazumdar:

Neither the organizations nor the employment to be generated were to be ends in themselves. They were merely to be the means of mobilizing poor rural women to participate more effectively in the wider process of socio-political development, to wrest from society the rights, the dignity and the resources to which they were entitled for their own development, through collective action to increase their voice in development decisions that affected their lives (1989, p. 11 in Kabeer, 1994, p. 256).

The *Charter of Feminist Principles for Africa Feminists* (African Feminist Forum, 2006, pp. 10-13) offers feminist rights-based approaches the strategies of solidarity and respect, all

women as “agents in our lives and societies”, transparent organizations that practice equality, and “power-sharing across generations” which includes growing multi-generational feminist leadership through mentorship and networks. These ideas echo feminist strategies arising out of the previous section. Supporting feminist rights-based approaches, these strategies expand the notion of power-sharing with solidarity, support participation with agency, and reinforce the intergenerational aspect of shared power and leadership.

While feminist scholars readily evaluate human rights approaches to development (Heyzer, 2005; Kabeer, 2005; Gill, Warner, Weiss & Gupta, 2009), there is a paucity of research on the application of feminist rights-based approaches *within* women’s organizations. In addition to shared power and leadership (Alpizar Dúran, 2007), feminist rights-based approaches must include critical reflection on who is involved in, and who benefits from, decision-making; and evaluation of planned community human rights outcomes. The rights-based approach employed and advocated by World YWCA, discussed above, is one example. In the words of one World YWCA staff member:

...for the YWCA [the rights-based approach is] definitely about grounding our work in human rights principles, but it's also about helping the organization to transition its programming, to take a deeper analysis of the root causes of injustice and inequality, and to also strengthen the advocacy component, particularly with those who have an obligation to fulfill rights...The YWCA, because of its Christian background, really started with a charitable approach and it was providing food for the hungry and providing shelter for those who needed a place to stay...And over time most YWCAs...moved towards a more community development perspective where they were meeting the needs of the community. So, instead of providing food for the hungry they might be providing economic empowerment programs so that women could feed their own families. Now I think what we are trying to do is to push to the next level, which is what is the underlying causes for why those people don't have food or why women continue to be subjected to violence. Yes, it's still important that we have the shelter for women who are experiencing violence because that is a very real need and it's part of fulfilling women's rights to escape violence and to have a life free of violence. But at the same time we need the advocacy to make sure the laws are in place, that there is sufficient policy. So part of it is really moving our movement from a program-service delivery orientation which has a charitable origin into a greater engagement in advocacy and looking at some of the

bigger picture because otherwise we will always be here and will always be toward our vision for a better world without getting at what's causing these deep-seated gender inequalities and injustice...And I think the other part of it is this critical issue of participation and making sure that any programs and services we have are led by those they are designed to address...so you are not forever having to claim the rights on behalf of others but you are building the capacity of those who are most affected to really drive that work themselves. And part of it now, the push for us, is to really get at the heart of non-discrimination and to make sure that we don't exclude any groups...I think at the moment most [YWCA] don't exclude people on the basis of programs but the exclusion comes more at the leadership level (World YWCA staff member, interview, 2013).

Through Sen (2005) and others (Cornwall, Harrison & Whitehead, 2007; Dzodzi, 2007; Drinkwater, 2009; Hickey & Mitlin, 2009) I have come to understand the power of embracing rights-based approaches as strategies with the potential to fulfill the rights of women, young women and girls, including young women's right to participation in public life including decision-making within women's organizations. Feminist rights-based approaches demand accountability for rights in all spheres and at all levels, both within women's organizations and in all other institutions, places and spaces. When operationalized, they have the potential to transform power precisely because they not only model the transformation of power relations among women but, critically, are connected to the international legal system through which states are accountable for ensuring that rights are respected, protected and fulfilled. As Mohan reminds us, "only by linking participatory approaches to wider, and more difficult, processes of democratization, anti-imperialism and feminism will long-term changes occur" (2001, p. 166). Through analysis of the leadership model at YWCA Solomon Islands, this paper will show that feminist rights-based approaches have the potential to transform women's organizations controlled by a small number of privileged women into organizations led by grassroots women and young women sharing power and leadership. In addition, feminist rights-based approaches lead to the realization of gender equality and human rights outcomes in communities, nations and global policy spaces.

Another important context for research on YWCA Solomon Islands' leadership model is the history of, and current situation in, Solomon Islands. Understanding the impacts of missionary intervention, colonialism and the 1999-2003 conflict on the changing roles of women throughout history and today, as well as what kinds of leadership are valued, will allow analysis of research data against the backdrop of Solomon Islands history and culture. Chapter 3 explores Solomon Islands as a research context, including the role of women's organizations in the country and the history of YWCA Solomon Islands.

Chapter 3: Solomon Islands: History and Context of Women's Lives, Women's Organizations and the YWCA

In order to understand YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach, it is important to understand the socio-historical context in which the organization has developed and operates. Particularly significant are the ways that women's roles and lived realities have changed throughout history, changing understandings of leadership, as well as the important role of women's organizations in communities and in women's lives. These changes have been impacted by: (i) relationships characterized by power and economic inequalities with European organizers of forced and indentured labour, missionaries, the British colonial administration, and more recently the Australia-led Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI); (ii) imposition of a centralized Westminster-style system of government (Pollard, 2006); (iii) economic dependence on aid and primary resources which leaves the national government beholden to foreign donors and corporations (McDougall & Kere, 2011); (iv) redefinition of leadership from *painaha* relationships based on reciprocity and mutual accountability to the contemporary association of men with leadership based on public power and wealth (Pollard, 2006); and (v) continuing impacts of the 1999-2003 conflict.

Solomon Islands: Economy

Although Solomon Islands is a country rich in natural resources, its economic development has always been dependent on the priorities of outside interests. From the British colonial administration's focus on financing itself rather than long-term economic development; to an open door policy and land alienation to foreign corporations; to uneven and unsustainable economic development based on expediency, there is no end in sight to Solomon Islands' economic dependence (Bennett, 1987). The current economic picture is troubling. While GDP is

growing at a rate of 10.6% in 2011, 4.8% in 2012 and an estimated 2.5% in 2013, gold and agricultural production have slowed (Asian Development Bank, 2013, p. 176, 123). Logging has provided up to 20% of national revenue and 50% of export revenue (Moore, 2007, p. 184), but stocks will be exhausted within the next ten years (International Monetary Fund IMF, 2013). All major industries, including fishing, are largely controlled by foreign companies (Moore, 2007). The resource-based economy is vulnerable to natural disasters and fluctuating commodity prices (IMF, 2013). In 2012, aid represented 24.5% of total gross domestic product (IMF, 2013, p. 14). Solomon Islanders are facing inflation rates of 7.4% in 2011, 5.9% in 2012, and an estimated 5.5% in 2013 while per capita income remains small at US \$1,786 in 2012 (IMF, 2013, p. 14). Only 31% of men and 16% of women are engaged in paid employment and 80% of youth are unemployed (World Bank Sydney, 2012b, p. 2).

The economic situation in Solomon Islands profoundly impacts women, young women and girls. Women and children represent over 74% of the 22.7% of the population reported to be living on less than \$1/day (Solomon Islands Ministry of Development, Planning and Aid Co-ordination, 2010, p. 58). Ongoing land disputes prevent traditional land owners, including women, from deriving fair economic benefits from custom land (Bennett, 1987). Of the over 80% rural population, most women are engaged in subsistence agriculture (Joint NGOs Group, 2012). Unpaid work responsibilities, the rising cost of transport to distant markets, and the belief that women cannot earn income without permission from their husbands make it difficult for women to earn income from agricultural work (Joint NGOs Group, 2012). This presents economic barriers to children's and especially girls' education, as well as travel to access medical and other services (Joint NGOs Group, 2012). While the Medium-Term Development Strategy prioritizes raising the standard of living in rural and peri-urban areas, women's realities

are ignored by the strategy other than an acknowledgement of the need to address gender-based violence (Joint NGOs Group, 2012). For families that do earn incomes through paid employment, market sales, other forms of entrepreneurship, or land royalties, most women are excluded from decision-making about how household income is spent and family needs are seldom prioritized in spending decisions (Joint NGOs Group, 2012).

Solomon Islands: Politics and Leadership

The male-dominated, hierarchical, formal political system in Solomon Islands today is incompatible with traditional leadership models based on egalitarianism, reciprocity, servant leadership and wealth redistribution (Pollard, 2006). Traditional leadership structures have been eroded by capitalism, missionary intervention, and colonialism, including the colonial administration's "pacification" program (Bennett, 1987, p. 106). Women's traditional roles as counterparts and partners to their husbands have diminished in importance as leadership and power have moved further and further into public spaces from which women are largely excluded (Pollard, 2006). While women continue to play important informal leadership roles in Churches and communities, their relegation to the private sphere and exclusion from formal leadership roles in politics, Churches and the public service has deepened inequality between women and men which in turn reinforces women's marginalization (Pollard, 2006).

Solomon Islands has a Westminster-style national government with 50 elected Members of Parliament and a Prime Minister chosen by parliament (Corrin, 2009). Since 1981, there are also nine provinces governed by Provincial Assemblies plus the capital city of Honiara governed by the Honiara Town Council (Corrin, 2009, p. 214). The fluid political system in Solomon Islands actually mixes customary leadership at the local level, headed by "big men" or chiefs, with the centralized national/provincial system (Corrin, 2009, McDougall & Kere, 2011).

National politics is characterized by unstable coalitions, frequent non-confidence motions and changes in Prime Minister, regular Cabinet shuffles, and frequent movement of Members of Parliament from one political party to another or to independent status (Corrin, 2009). There have been calls for a federal system in the wake of rampant neglect of rural areas, and work on a draft Federal Constitution has been ongoing for nearly a decade (Corrin, 2009).

It can be argued that the Westminster-style government system in Solomon Islands is a product of colonialism and a poor fit for a country where most people's primary identity is as members of their home village (Hameiri, 2007). Solomon Islanders are connected to one another through *kastom* land custodianship, close relationships within families and rural villages, village hierarchies and power structures and, for many Solomon Islanders, the *wontok* system. One's *wontoks* are defined by a combination of kinship, geography and life experiences, and are often chosen as the group to which a person has primary allegiance (field notes, October 15, 2012). Local issues continue to dominate elections, and Solomon Islanders are not bound by commonalities wide enough to generate broad-based support for political parties (Hameiri, 2007). Hameiri argues that among peoples so diverse, governments seeking political power have no alternatives but "the weaving together of fragile power bases that rely on personal allegiances" (2007, p. 422).

Despite increases in the number of women contesting national elections from one in 1980 to fourteen in 2001, only one woman, Hilda Kari, has been elected at the national level since independence (Pollard, 2006, p. 31). Paid political leadership is a different model than the traditionally valued servant leadership and community spiritedness which continue to characterize women's community leadership (Pollard, 2006). With rising inflation, increasing family need for cash income makes balancing women's voluntary leadership more and more

difficult (Pollard, 2006). Leadership training, changes in beliefs that power is for men, changes to the practice of men deciding who a family or community will vote for, and strengthened political parties are needed to support women's participation in formal political leadership (Pollard, 2006).

Solomon Islands: Religion

Missionary intervention, a convergence of interests between the British colonial administration and the missionaries, the alignment of customary leaders with the Churches when the colonial administration usurped some of their power, and the strength of the Churches in contemporary Solomon Islands, have led to a population of which 98% identify as Christian (Bennett, 1987; McDougall & Kere, 2011, p. 155). Christianity has had mixed impacts on women's lives, eroding women's traditional roles and leadership through active efforts to change Solomon Islands cultures while at the same time by the late 1800s opening new spaces for women in informal community and Church leadership including as nurses, teachers and administrators (Pollard, 2006, p. 24). Church women's groups, of which there are over 2000 in Solomon Islands, develop women's leadership, build relationships and networks among women from different cultural groups and islands, advocate for formal leadership roles for women, and give women important informal leadership roles in communities (Pollard, 2006, pp. 24-26).

Solomon Islands: Demographics and Geography

Solomon Islands is a complex, dynamic and vibrant mix of just over one-half million Melanesian (95.3%), Micronesian (1.2%) and Polynesian (3.1%) peoples with cultures and traditions shaped by vastly diverse the histories and experiences (Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 2009b). A history of small, discrete communities, as well as prevalent migration to

and within Solomon Islands because of warring, population growth, and seeking better environments, has led to ethnically related groups who speak different languages (or families of languages) and live in different coastal or inland areas (Bennett, 1987). Over 80 language groups are spoken throughout the country (Fangalasuu, Maetala, Rodi, Vota & Wickham, 2011). A geography of twin chains of nearly 1,000 islands scattered across 1,400km between Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu has contributed to the diversity of peoples (Bennett, 2000).

The total population of Solomon Islands is 552,267 (World Bank Sydney, 2012a, p. 5), with just over 12.5% living in the capital city of Honiara (Solomon Islands National Statistics Office, 2011, p. 3). The population is 48% female (Pollard, 2006, p. 1) and over 70% youth under the age of twenty-nine (World Bank Sydney, 2012a, p. 2). Just 18.9% of the population has completed secondary education (World Bank, 2012a, p. 5). While young women make up just over one-third of the total population, they are under-represented in secondary and tertiary education and low literacy is a major barrier to paid employment (Joint NGOs Group, 2012). Over 80% of people in Solomon Islands live in rural areas, while the urban growth rate is 4.7% (World Bank Sydney, 2012a, p. 5). The lack of services available in rural areas increases the burden of unpaid work on women and girls, while migration to Honiara increases household expenses and often deepens real poverty (Joint NGOs group, 2012).

Solomon Islands is divided into 9 provinces: Choiseul and Western Province in the west; Makira, Isabel, Rennell and Bellona, Guadalcanal where the capital city of Honiara is located, and Malaita where the former capital of Tulagi is located in the centre; and Makira and Temotu in the east (Bennett, 2000). Over 87% of the land in Solomon Islands is owned through *kastom* (Hameiri, 2007, p. 420). About 40% of Solomon Islanders practice matrilineal inheritance (Moore, 2007, p. 180) and in these communities women may also become heads of their clans

with decision-making power over land allocation and the marriages of younger relatives (Pollard, 2006). However, as women's traditional roles and leadership have eroded more and more family and community decision-making is controlled by men (Joint NGOs Group, 2012).

History of Solomon Islands: Changing Women's Roles and Gender Relations

Although cultures and communities are always dynamic, adapting to changing and new environments and relationships, traditional life in Solomon Islands began to change substantively in the early 1800s through contact with European traders (Belshaw, 1954; Bennett, 1987; Bennett, 2000). Traditional communities sustained themselves with land and sea resources and intra- and inter-community trade (Belshaw, 1954; Bennett, 1987). Social relationships were largely within kinship groups, and were governed by reciprocity and a sense of interdependence (Belshaw, 1954). Every community member had a role, with older persons and people with disabilities participating in handicrafts, piggery and spiritual responsibilities (Belshaw, 1954). In egalitarian traditional societies, community members shared leadership in many situations (Belshaw, 1954).

Women had specific roles in traditional communities which included acting as negotiators when bartering took place between stranger groups while men provided protection, primary responsibility for agriculture after men cleared the land, transporting produce and firewood from gardens to settlements, animal husbandry, producing clothing, bearing children, and sharing the work of producing shell valuables for ceremonial exchange (Bennett, 1987, pp. 12-13). Women bore incredibly heavy workloads, including compared to men, but were also highly valued (Pollard, 2006). In many communities, the value of women was recognized through the provision of bride wealth, comprised of shell valuables and food, to a bride's relatives to compensate for the family's loss when she was married (Bennett, 1987; Joint NGOs Group, 2012). Women were

also wealth producers, raising pigs which were used to build and maintain relationships and secure men's reputations as possessors of wealth (Pollard, 2006).

Formal leadership was through "big men" or chiefs, who primarily gained recognition as leaders through industriousness and proven leadership abilities even in communities where chieftainship was hereditary (Pollard, 2006). Good leaders were considered to possess a balance of character traits including assertiveness and non-aggressiveness, a desire to be on top and willingness to share leadership, pride and humility (Pollard, 2006). Good leaders also worked hard to amass and redistribute wealth (Pollard, 2006; Bennett, 1987). The most common roles of "big men" were "warrior", "feast giver" and "priest" (Pollard, 2006, p. 11). Women were understood as partners of formal leaders, playing important roles in feasts: raising pigs and gardening, cooking and serving; acting as peace-makers following warring; and playing specific roles in spiritual life (Pollard, 2006, p. 14).

Through contact with European traders, inequality within and between communities grew. Iron tools available to communities with access to traders reduced men's workload by one-third, but did not impact women's labour burden (Bennett, 1987). Men used their extra time in ceremonies and warring, among other activities, and shell valuable production grew beyond strictly ceremonial need and become money-like with an established value (Bennett, 1987). Protection alliances between communities grew as warring intensified with increased availability of guns (Bennett, 1987). Inequality deepened for communities without access to European goods, including inland peoples of Guadalcanal and Malaita (Bennett, 1987, p. 43).

Things changed again when what was euphemistically called the "labour trade" of forced and some voluntary labour reached Solomon Islands in the 1860s-1870s, with between one-third and one-fifth of Solomon Islanders, all men, "indentured" in Queensland, Fiji, Samoa and New

Caledonia (Bennett, 1987; Bennett, 2000, p. 37). Solomon Islanders spent an average of three years overseas, and many who returned to Solomon Islands were not repatriated to their home communities (Belshaw, 1954, p. 36). Many chiefs and “big men” benefitted from the “labour trade”, through gifts given to entice communities to give up their young men (Belshaw, 1954, Bennett, 1987). In a country with a population of 100,000-150,000, nearly 30,000 people survived the “labour trade” and returned to Solomon Islands by the time the “labour trade” officially ended in 1910 (Bennett, 2000, pp. 38-40). Although having so many men out of the country must have impacted women’s lives and roles, I have been unable to find any literature addressing this theme.

By the 1880s, Christian missionaries were starting to arrive in Solomon Islands from Europe (Bennett, 1987). When Solomon Islanders returned from overseas plantations, more missionaries followed and the Churches represented in Solomon Islands included the Marists (Roman Catholic), the Presbyterians, the Melanesian Mission (Anglican), the Seventh Day Adventists, the South Seas Evangelical Mission, and the Methodists (Belshaw, 1954, p. 22).

In 1893 the British government declared Solomon Islands a “British protectorate”, which it remained until independence in 1978 (Bennett, 2000). The purpose was to protect strategic interests in Australia and New Zealand, as well as ongoing regulation of the trade in arms and persons who were “indentured” (Bennett, 2000, pp. 38-39). Together the British colonial administration and the missionaries worked on “pacification” of Solomon Islanders, although for different purposes (Bennett, 1987, p. 106).

People of the Solomon Islands were again “indentured” to develop a plantation economy to support the colonial administration and 400,000-500,000 acres of land were legally stolen from *kastom* custodians for plantation development because Resident Commissioner Woodford

had declared them to be ‘unowned, unoccupied and uncultivated’ (Bennett, 2000, p. 41). Woodford was not concerned with long-term economic development of Solomon Islands because he believed in the “eventual extinction of the existing native race” (Woodford in Bennett, 2000, p. 40). Some missionaries reinforced colonial practices, and followed Woodford’s policy of industrial education that did not “foster intellect” nor teach “effective ways to articulate their demands” (Bennett, 2000, p. 46). John Goldie advocated “teaching our people that the development of their land is a Christian duty and that labour is honourable” (Bennett, 2000, p. 45). So-called pacification and British law weakened traditional leaders’ power and ability to accumulate wealth by eliminating or transforming their warrior and priestly roles, and transferred power to both the missions and the colonial administration (Bennett, 1987). While some Solomon Islanders sought new roles in the missions, “indentured” labour on Solomon Islands plantations and land sales were other avenues to cash income and wealth (Bennett, 1987). Migration of labourers, many of whom were Malaitans, from poorer areas of Solomon Islands to the plantations and lands of Guadalcanal and Western Province caused tensions between traditional land owners and migrant settlers (Bennett, 2002; Dinnen, 2002).

The rise in importance of cash in Solomon Islands society has had multiple negative effects on women, young women and girls. Matrilineal property rights weakened as land became a potential source of cash income, returned plantation labourers resisted distribution of their earnings among kin, individual property rights were recognized, land ownership by individual family units became more prevalent, and patrilineal inheritance expanded (Belshaw, 1954; Bennett, 1987). Taxes imposed by the British colonial administration to incentivize Solomon Islanders to enter “indentured” labour on plantations reaffirmed the importance of cash income (Belshaw, 1954, pp. 119-120). The amount of required bride wealth inflated, and the

reconceptualization of shell valuables as money and rising demands for cash has slowly distorted the tradition into today's understanding of purchase and ownership of women through bride price, practiced by over 90% of Solomon Islands communities in 2012 (Joint NGOs Group, 2012, p. 16). Violence against women increased as the idea of ownership, along with Christianity, resulted in perceptions that women are worth less than men and must obey their husbands (Joint NGOs Group, 2012).

Despite independence from Britain in 1978, women's roles have been irrevocably changed by colonialism. Independence of Solomon Islands from Britain in 1978 happened in the absence of nation-wide calls for liberation (Premdas & Steeves, 1983). The many regional self-determination movements prior to 1978 were all squashed by the colonial government (Bennett, 2002). One example was Mathew Belamatanga's movement, based on the United Nations Charter, calling for freedom of religion, freedom of speech, representation in government, local issues decided according to customary law, better formal education and economic development benefits for the peoples of Solomon Islands (Bennett, 2002). Another was *Maasina Rulu*, based in Malaita, which demanded increased plantation wages, recognition of *kastom*, and self-government (Bennett, 2002). The British decided to leave Solomon Islands when it suited their own interests, partly to get out from under the cost of the annual subsidy (Premdas & Steeves, 1983).

The impacts of colonial and missionary rule on the peoples of Solomon Islands continue to reverberate today. One impact has been distortions and disruptions of gender roles practiced by peoples in Solomon Islands before contact. It can be said for Melanesian peoples that historically "while women's domains were mostly separate from those of men, women were often regarded as equivalent in intrinsic worth and experienced their domains as a source of

security, solidarity, and dignity” (Scheyvens, 2003, p. 25). Male colonial administrators and missionaries conceptualized leaders as men, recruiting and training men for leadership positions and leaving many women in the villages and outside of public decision-making (Pollard, 2003). Missionaries also started formal education for some girls and women, teaching sewing, new cooking and childcare techniques, and Christian charity (Pollard, 2003, p. 47). Dr. Alice Aruhe’eta Pollard writes of complex impacts of Christianity on women’s roles:

In certain respects, such models narrowed the opportunities and status of indigenous women by ideally limiting them to the domestic spheres of homemaking and childcare but in other ways Christianity strengthened the position and ritual participation of women as members of communities and congregations (2003, p. 47).

Another impact of colonization has been to frame and shape relationships between Solomon Islanders and *waet-man* expatriates. Bennett writes that “the loss of power, and conquest by a few Europeans aided by ‘friendly natives,’ left resentment, shame and often a sense of inferiority” (2000, p. 61). The existence of internalized racism was reinforced by one research participant who talked about “having the mentality that you [white people] are better than us [Solomon Islanders]” (group interview, November 6, 2012). This legacy is exacerbated by neo-colonialism by Australia in the form of RAMSI, ostensibly dispatched to restore ‘law and order’ after the conflict that took place in Solomon Islands from 1999-2003 (Hameiri, 2007). Australia has used the rhetoric of the “failed state” to justify RAMSI’s continued presence in Solomon Islands to “promote good governance by helping Solomon Islanders to rebuild their country’s institutions and institutional capacity and integrity...key to... long-term stabilization” (Hamieri, 2007, p. 411). While Australia and New Zealand were invited by the Solomon Islands Government on multiple occasions to restore ‘law and order’ following the 1999-2003 conflict, this invitation did not extend to reconstruction of the state in Australia’s image:

The perception that traditional institutions and values have weakened the establishment and operation of the modern state, and therefore spurred the emergence and escalation of the conflict in Solomon Islands, has contributed to RAMSI's top-down approach, which relies on the insertion of Australian personnel into most key positions in Solomon Islands public administration. Such actions are taken despite public declarations emphasizing the importance of indigenous ownership to the success of governance reforms (Hameiri, 2007, p. 412).

The conflict of 1999-2003, called 'the tension' by Solomon Islanders, was a conflict seemingly between the Isatbu Freedom Movement of rural Guadalcanal province and the Malaita Eagle Force which claimed to represent the Malaitan diaspora (Dinnen, 2002). However, the historical roots of the conflict are linked to resource scarcity on Malaita and date back to "indentured" labour on plantations when Malaitans made up nearly two-thirds of the labour force on Guadalcanal and elsewhere (Bennett, 2002). Since that time many Malaitan "settlers" have left the densely populated province of Malaita to live in Guadalcanal, including the capital city of Honiara, and the perception among many Solomon Islanders is that Malaitans dominate the labour market, economy and political leadership (Dinnen, 2002). Another contributing factor has been imposition by the colonial administration of individual land ownership, in conflict with indigenous notions of custodianship and putting clan interests first, which in combination with the cash economy had led to "personal interest supersed[ing] that of the tribe" (Fangalasuu *et al.*, 2011, p. 8). The conflict, and subsequent public violence that erupted in 2006, have been in part caused by "the growing disaffection of many Solomon Islanders with their marginalization from important political and economic processes" (Hameiri, 2007, pp. 432-433).

The 1999-2003 conflict has significantly impacted the material realities of women's lives. During the conflict, women claimed roles as peacebuilders, decision-makers and household and community leaders (Fangalasuu *et al.*, 2011). Women took part in peace negotiations among militant groups and called for international intervention to help bring peace (Fangalasuu *et al.*,

2011). An additional role that women have played is to push for the Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission to acknowledge women's submission and to release its official report "because without the truth "we will not see the opportunities in the future and we will not have direction"" (Fangalasuu *et al.*, 2011, p. 10). The women's submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission states:

Women believe land issues must be addressed; development and services must be decentralised; there needs to be electoral reform; women must be empowered in politics; and the government should be transparent and accountable in fulfilling its obligations to its citizens. Education, including cultural and gender awareness, is essential. There need to be more celebrations of women, such as a national women's festival, and the economic empowerment of women (Fangalasuu *et al.*, 2011, p. 5).

Conflict increased domestic and public violence, including rape, torture and extortion (Fangalasuu *et al.*, 2011). Most women have remained silent about experiencing and witnessing violence for reasons which include fear of repercussions such as demands for compensation, forced marriage to perpetrators of sexual violence, or additional violence for bringing "shame" to her family (Fangalasuu *et al.*, 2011, pp. 10-11). There are ongoing dimensions of increased violence during conflict. The 2009 Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study found that while 37% of girls experience sexual abuse before the age of fifteen and two out of three women experience "physical and/or sexual partner violence", 70% of women have not reported the violence to anyone (Secretariat of the Pacific Community SPC, 2009a, p. 3, 4, 8). In addition, the study found that 73% of women in Solomon Islands believe that violence by husbands against their wives is justified in particular circumstances including "infidelity and disobedience" (SPC, 2009a, p. 3). Such beliefs are reinforced by the fact that the *Penal Code* does not specifically recognize domestic violence offences, nor is there mandatory prosecution for offences that would fall under domestic violence (Solomon Islands Ministry for Youth, Women, Children & Family Affairs, unpublished).

Women living in Solomon Islands today experience multiple additional aspects of gender inequality. One Honiara-based study documents that over 61% of men and 65% of women believe that women should submit to and obey men (Joint NGOs Group, 2012, p. 16). This belief undermines women's leadership and decision-making within families and communities, and is a significant barrier to women's participation in political and public life. Lack of access to education exacerbates women's exclusion from formal leadership. In Solomon Islands, the majority of the 66% of people who have only primary school education are women and girls, in part because the unaffordability of education combined with the widespread belief that women belong in the home (Joint NGOs Group, 2012, p. 21). In addition, weak matrilineal property rights continue to undermine women's traditional roles as guardians of, and decision-makers about, *kastom* land despite the fact that matrilineal inheritance continues to be protected by customary law (Joint NGOs Group, 2012). Despite the barriers, many women continue to assert their traditional roles as leaders and decision-makers in their families and communities.

Women's Organizations and YWCA Solomon Islands: Context and History

Women in Solomon Islands have always organized for the health and development of their families and communities. Today's women's groups and organizations have deep roots in both traditional ideas about the meaning of leadership as providing support to communities, as well as in women's traditional role in ensuring the survival of their communities. Dr. Alice Aruhe'eta Pollard explains:

Ultimately, the emergence of modern women's groupings in Solomon Islands can be traced back to the first settlers on the island shores. In several areas, women organized themselves into groups for work, recreation, and ritual activity long before traders, missionaries, and colonizers arrived. Women had special places and positions within their clans and social groups, complementary to those of men. The different indigenous cultures made provisions for women in the ownership of land and property. Women were involved in decision-making in various ways in families, communities, and tribes. They

were consulted about and participated in festivities and celebrations. They contributed actively to the education of their children...They were very knowledgeable about the health problems of their families and about indigenous drugs and were well versed in local treatments for different diseases (Buchanan 1998). They were, as now, central in the agricultural sector, producing food for the survival of their family, community, and tribe (Ward 1995:1). To varying degrees, the indigenous societies acknowledged the contributions and activities of women. For example, the 'Are' Are people of south Malaita, to whom I belong, customarily place high value on women and recognize their wisdom in the family's upbringing. The organization and the well-being of any family centres on the women. Women are seen as the cords that bind the present generation with the future, they link one tribe to another, link spirituality with nature, and are the entry and exit points for existence on earth" (2003, pp. 46-47).

Women's groups and organizations have continued to be important in development efforts in Solomon Islands at the local and national levels. In 1962, the colonial administration created the "Women's Interest" section, reflecting its understanding of women's domestic role by offering courses designed to build women's home economics skills (Pollard, 2003). As government understanding of women's role in development expanded post-independence, training in business and "appropriate technology" was offered and in 1988 the Women's Interest section became the Women and Development Division (WDD) (Pollard, 2003, p. 48). WDD was allocated a small budget and given responsibility for four policy areas: drafting women's policies, women's training and capacity-building, research and dissemination, and managing development projects (Pollard, 2003). First cut-backs in the public sector and then economic devastation following the conflict of 1999-2003 have decimated the WDD's budget (Pollard, 2003). In response, "the WDD has maximized its strengths by establishing relationships of dialogue, networking, cooperation, advice and practical support with the Solomon Islands National Council of Women, church women's organizations, and other NGOs" (Pollard, 2003, p. 48). It is only in partnership with women's organizations that the WDD is able to fulfill its mandate.

Women's organizations in Solomon Islands range from small women's church groups to national women's NGOs. Shifts in policy at the global and national levels are reflected in the mandates of women's organizations which "no longer limit their collective interests to welfare and traditional women's areas but demonstrate increasing concern for economic, development, human rights, and environmental issues and growing interest in decision-making and politics" (Pollard, 2003, p. 56). Despite backlash from men at the family, village, provincial and national levels, women's leadership is slowly but increasingly recognized in Solomon Islands as women's participation in public life gradually expands. Women's multiple leadership roles during and post the 1999-2003 conflict have reinforced ideas of women as leaders. Moser (2007) warns that it is all too easy for equality gains to be lost and identifies specific strategies for building on this foundation including community-based organizations further developing women's leadership, and advocacy for gender equality and women's rights. Moser's centralization of the role of women's organizations echoes Dr. Alice Aruhe'eta Pollard's characterization of women's organizations in Solomon Islands as "central to the lives of most women...the main basis for their development and empowerment, and increasingly contribut[ors] to governance in difficult times..." (2003, p. 46).

YWCA Solomon Islands has been contributing to women's leadership development, women's rights and women's empowerment since even before it was officially founded in 1975. In 1971-72, a hostel for young women coming to Honiara from the provinces to work in government and other sectors was built with a grant from the British Government. In 1973, based on the YWCA's history of providing safe housing for young women since 1855 in London, the British government approached the World YWCA about the hostel in Honiara becoming a YWCA (Feary & Lai, 2012, p. 23). Kuria Hughes, a Solomon Islander originally

from Western Province who was to become the first General Secretary of YWCA Solomon Islands, participated in these negotiations as a representative of the Solomon Islands Government's Social Welfare Department (Feary & Lai, 2012). Ruth Lechte, who had helped start a YWCA in Fiji, and her partner Diane Goodwillie, who even today continues to support the growth and development of YWCAs in the Pacific, represented the YWCA in negotiations (Feary & Lai, 2012). In the early years, when a YWCA in Solomon Islands was still in the planning stages and even before she officially started working for the YWCA, Kuria Hughes worked to develop partnerships and networks among diverse women's groups and organizations.

[Kuria Hughes] did this very successfully by writing letters, attending various meetings in Honiara and the provinces, and using common religious beliefs as a basis for making connections. In 1974, invitations were extended to all church groups to attend a meeting to discuss how to coordinate the activities of the various groups associated with women's development (Feary & Lai, 2012, p. 26).

Under Kuria Hughes' leadership, the YWCA called for a national women's organization "capable of influencing the government in the area of women's affairs" (Feary & Lai, 2012, p. 26). This call led YWCA and others to found the National Council of Women, which today is funded directly by the Women's Development Division of the Solomon Islands Government with a mandate of increasing women's representation in politics (Solomon Islands Government Employee, interview, October 19, 2012). Advocacy on women's and gender equality has always been an important part of the work of YWCA Solomon Islands. For example, in 1975 Kuria Hughes presented at the South Pacific Women's Conference about "the role of education in improving the status of women" (Feary & Lai, 2012, p. 27).

Kuria Hughes' commitment to working with women in communities across Solomon Islands was tested when some churches campaigned against the developing YWCA, fearing that young women would be attracted away from their congregations (Feary & Lai, 2012). Kuria

Hughes used the YWCA Solomon Islands' monthly radio program in 1978 to affirm that "joining the YWCA does not stop you being a member of your church group or other group" (Kuria Hughes in Feary & Lai, 2012, p. 28). When the branch office was opened in Munda in Western Province, MP John Talasasa claimed that the YWCA was "...spoiling the Solomon Islands women and damaging the life of communities...run by black Europeans who are doing it for their own benefit..." (Feary & Lai, 2012, p. 45). Calling the women of the YWCA "black Europeans" on the eve of independence was a slur based on the myth that work on improving the status of women in Solomon Islands is an imposition of European/colonial values and not part of Solomon Islands culture. Kuria Hughes worked with Merle Aquorau and the Munda YWCA Committee to build and strengthen relationships with community members and local churches so that the YWCA could become part of the community (Feary & Lai, 2012).

While it is true that the history of the YWCA in many countries was distinctly colonialist in nature (Seymour-Jones, 1994), YWCA Solomon Islands was developed and led by Solomon Islanders from the beginning with external support from the World YWCA and YWCA of Fiji in particular. Ruth Lechte explains that "the Pacific YWCAs were less colonial in outlook than the Caribbean YWCAs, which were older and started by the British...They have become more effective because they are not on a colonial model" (in Seymour-Jones, 1994, p. 357). YWCA Solomon Islands is an independently incorporated association and a voting member of the World YWCA under a federated model. Currently 55% of the World YWCA board members are from Global South countries, with one board member from Solomon Islands.

YWCA Solomon Islands has been at the forefront of change in women's lives in many different ways throughout its more than thirty-year history. From running a hostel so that young women migrating to Honiara to work would have safe housing; to purchasing and running a

kindergarten to enable women to do paid work outside the home; to working with young women to build confidence and self-reliance in the early 1980s; to youth leadership training, work on women's health and microfinance in the 1990s; to advocacy for fair working conditions for women in the Noro tuna cannery, YWCA Solomon Islands has always worked for greater gender equality (Feary & Lai, 2012).

The recent history of YWCA Solomon Islands begins with the period immediately following the 1999-2003 conflict. During the conflict, the YWCA administration was largely inactive due to insecurity and violence in Honiara (Feary & Lai, 2012). Some YWCA members personally experienced violence, and many returned to the provinces seeking greater safety (YWCA member, interview, October 16, 2012). Acting General Secretary, Sophia Chottu, was relocated to Australia with the help of the World YWCA (Feary & Lai, 2012). The hostel remained open to house any young women and their *wontoks* choosing to live in Honiara during this period, and the kindergarten opened when it was safe to do so (Feary & Lai, 2012).

So that period, and it was a tension period too, the Ethnic Tension, there was nothing going on. The hostel, the Matron just looked after. She received rentals from the girls and she banked. She was the one who just looked after the hostel. No office, there was no office in place. The *Kindi*, similar to what happened with the hostel there was...the former Coordinator of the *Kindi*, she looked after the affairs of the *Kindi*. And she just ran the *Kindi*; when it was safe for her to open classes she opened it...So only those two operated during those periods, the hostel and the *Kindi*. No office in place. So there wasn't much focus on programs for young women (YWCA member, interview, October 22, 2012).

Rebuilding the YWCA post-conflict has been a long road which began with extremely tense power dynamics, including among members of the board in 2003. As one YWCA member describes, "They had personal issues...they told [the President] off during one of the meetings...the drama it really was between the [two] board members. They were, I will say, the powerful women in the board, and they drove the board" (interview, October 22, 2012). The two

powerful women within the board belonged to the elite of Solomon Islands society, with prestigious jobs and higher socio-economic status than most Solomon Islanders. Thus, power at YWCA Solomon Islands was concentrated in the hands of women occupying elite class and social positions.

Partway through 2003, the power dynamics at YWCA Solomon Islands began to change when a hiring panel composed of the YWCA Hostel Chair, who was a tenant, and two other women representing partner organizations, hired a young woman General Secretary. This was a surprise to the “powerful women in the board” who had anticipated that the other candidate for the position, herself a powerful woman in Solomon Islands and the sister of one of the controlling board members, would be selected by the hiring committee (YWCA member, interview, October 22, 2012). This was the beginning of the YWCA’s shift in power away from the elite and toward the grassroots, supporting Lynnsay Rongokea’s call to “defend the rights of women within our own organizations” (in Horn, 2009, p. 151). The next shift came in 2005, when a small committee which included an external supporter, the General Secretary, the Hostel Chair, and two board members, were directed by the membership to hold an AGM:

...everybody said the same. They wanted the board to go. Like there were views from a lot of Y members that this board must go. We wanted a new board. So we tried to get that support from all members... and there was this petition letter signed by all the hostel girls. They want the board to go... And just talking to other YWCA members they all shared the same view. They were here for a long time, the board... We formed a small steering committee. It was an AGM steering committee... We consulted with some other members and we came up with a firm plan to go ahead with the AGM... So we decided on a date... And then we put out, one month before that date we put out a notice on paper that there was going to be a AGM and this was the agenda. We set out the agenda... Nomination of candidates was conducted during the meeting instead of nominations to come in to the office prior to the meeting. Everything happened on the day (YWCA member, interview, October 22, 2012).

In 2005, the members demanded a meeting of the membership to hold democratic leadership elections. The nominations process happened during the meeting to ensure

transparency and neither of the two “powerful women” was re-elected (YWCA member, interview, October 22, 2012). Since the 2005 membership meeting, YWCA Solomon Islands held elections in 2007 and 2010 and elections are planned for 2013. In 2009, under the leadership of the second consecutive young woman General Secretary, YWCA Solomon Islands undertook a strategic planning process that included members, volunteers, staff and board members from both Honiara and Munda (YWCA member, interview, October 18, 2012). As a result of this process, the vision of YWCA Solomon Islands became: “creating space for young Solomon Islands women to influence change” (YWCA Solomon Islands, 2009, p. 5). Since 2003 YWCA Solomon Islands has been gradually changing from an organization where women with senior positions in government and the judiciary exercised “power over”, toward one in which women and young women at the grassroots exercise “power to”, “power with”, and “power within”. Prioritizing young women’s leadership and sharing power with young women leaders has been part of transforming power relations inside the YWCA.

The YWCA Solomon Islands’ commitment to sharing power with young women at the grassroots can be said to have guided the work of YWCA Solomon Islands in the last decade. In 2003, a young woman hostel tenant was the only YWCA representative on the panel that hired a young woman General Secretary with a university education and government work experience. In 2007, the YWCA membership elected a board that included 40% young women, one of whom was the Vice President. In 2008, when the General Secretary left the YWCA to pursue a Master’s in Business Administration in Fiji, the YWCA hired a young woman Programs and Admin Assistant to work with the young woman Office Assistant in the absence of a General Secretary. That small team, based on the expertise of the Programs and Admin Assistant, used a Participatory Learning Technique to gather information from members and young women about

their priorities and goals. Then a second young woman General Secretary, who had a university degree but no work experience, and a young woman Programs Officer joined the team along with a young woman volunteer from Australia named Kiri Dicker. Based on the results of the Participatory Learning Technique the team, with the help of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM), developed the Rise Up! young women's leadership program. In 2009, the Strategic Plan codified the existing focus on young women's leadership programs and at the AGM a new board was elected with 44% young women and another young woman Vice President. In 2012, a third young woman General Secretary was hired who has some secondary school and a vocational certificate in Community Development, and is from a remote rural village in the east of Solomon Islands.

I do not mean to imply that young women never held leadership positions in YWCA Solomon Islands prior to 2003. In fact, a General Secretary was hired during the 1980s who was twenty-nine years of age (YWCA member, interview, October 11, 2012). As well, the YWCA Solomon Islands constitution in effect from 1979 until October 2013 mandated that at least 25% of board members be young women under the age of thirty (YWCA Solomon Islands, 1979). However, the quota of young women board members was only adhered to beginning at the AGM in 2007 when the shift in power toward the grassroots and young women was well underway. While sharing power and decision-making with young women inside the YWCA and in the wider community only became an official priority with the adoption of the 2009 strategic plan and development of the Rise Up! young women's leadership program in 2010.

This shift has taken place for a number of reasons. It parallels the transformation in government in Solomon Islands from having a "Women's Interest" division to, as one staff of the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs put it, "we are now in a stage that we want to

advocate for gender equality” (interview, October 19, 2012). This change in Solomon Islands Government has been most noticeable in the post-conflict period, with the signing of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) on May 7, 2002, the development of the National Policy on Eliminating Violence Against Women (EVAW) and the Gender Equality and Women’s Development (GEWD) policy and plan of action in 2010, and in 2012 the drafting of a report to the United Nations Committee charged with monitoring CEDAW compliance which states:

The Government recognizes that CEDAW is an important human rights instrument that assures the empowerment of women and a catalyst towards gender equality. We appreciate that the costs of our own negligence to implement the obligations under CEDAW will deny Solomon Islanders their rights and freedom and a life of peaceful co-existence and prosperity that must be enjoyed by all citizens (Tom in Solomon Islands Ministry of Women, Youth and Children’s Affairs, unpublished).

It also parallels a change across the global YWCA movement, which is gradually transforming from a charity model to a rights-based approach. In 2011 the World YWCA movement adopted the 2012-2015 World YWCA Strategic Framework which specifies a focus on both women’s intergenerational leadership and women’s rights work, and which emphasizes a rights-based approach through “respecting diversity and upholding the human rights principles of participation, non-discrimination and accountability” (World YWCA, 2011b, p. 1). Through adoption of the 2012-2015 strategic framework, the YWCA movement prioritized a commitment to practicing human rights principles inside member organizations in contrast to the top-down approach of charity models.

However, YWCA Solomon Islands has not shifted to a rights-based approach because of a change in government priorities or the decisions of the global YWCA movement. It is the vision and leadership of YWCA Solomon Islands’ board of directors, membership, and a staff team led by three consecutive General Secretaries under age the age of thirty, that have

cultivated the shift toward supporting and facilitating the fulfillment of young women's and women's rights inside and outside of the YWCA. Noting the acceleration in recent years, I asked two YWCA Solomon Islands staff members what had caused it. They replied:

I think it's because of the YWCA in recent years has all of a sudden hired an all young women team in the office. So I think that is one of the reasons why this shift has happened. I feel that before there was older women in the office so, of course they were interested in women's issues, but how to cook healthy meals for your family, what a good woman should be doing, these kind of things. All of a sudden we now have young women working in the office...and young women who are, like, educated young women. And I guess confident young women (interview, November 5, 2013).

I feel that recently the shift has been from women's programs so they can learn how to cook and how to, you know, these things to this rights-based approach so young women should have all of these rights because they are human beings, you know? So, we are more involved in the CEDAW shadow reporting and the leadership for young women, Rise Up!, and encouraging young women to take up opportunities - work for the organization, volunteer, and, yeah. Those kind of things. So I feel that there has been this shift in the way we do things and in the way we think now in the organization. There is still somewhere, like, oh we need to train women on how to cook or how to do housekeeping. And I'm like, aargh, no, I don't want to be stuck in there (interview, November 5, 2012).

In the 2009-2014 YWCA Solomon Islands Strategic Plan, the organization formalized its commitment to young women's leadership with both its new vision statement¹⁴, above, and its new mission statement: "To strengthen the capacity of young Solomon Islands women to influence change through: (i) providing training and skills development, (ii) promoting an inclusive and healthy environment for women to reach their full potential, (iii) encouraging fellowship, (iv) promoting the value of partnerships and networks, (v) strengthening YWCA governance and management structures, and (vi) advocating for young women in decision-making" (YWCA Solomon Islands, 2009, p. 5). Through training and skills development, the YWCA builds the capacity of young women and women to know and claim their rights. Advocating for young women in decision-making inside and outside the YWCA supports

¹⁴ "Creating space for young Solomon Islands women to influence change" (YWCA Solomon Islands, 2009, p. 5)

fulfilment of young women's rights to participation in public life, and creates space for young women's priorities to influence policy, programs and law. Through inclusion and healthy relationships, the YWCA promotes shared power and leadership. By encouraging fellowship, the YWCA honours its Christian values and acknowledges the role of the Churches and Church women's and youth groups in the lives of Solomon Islanders.

Since almost all women and young women in Solomon Islands belong to Church women's groups (Pollard, 2003), and since the history of YWCA Solomon Islands involved building relationships with Churches as part of growing membership (Feary & Lai, 2012), it makes sense that faith plays a role at YWCA Solomon Islands. In the 1979-2013 constitution, the basis of the organization was stated as: "Faith in God and the Father Almighty, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord and Saviour, and in the Holy Spirit" (YWCA Solomon Islands, 1979, p. 1). While the purpose of the organization included "respond[ing] to the Love of God by providing opportunities for personal growth and by developing an active concern for the human community" (YWCA Solomon Islands, 1979, p. 1). Chapter 4 will explore the ways in which some members' interpretations of Christian values leads to expectations around how "good" young women should behave, and how so-called "bad" behaviour impacts some interpersonal relationships within YWCA Solomon Islands. YWCA Solomon Islands has always been inspired by faith, but has not been a religious organization (Feary & Lai, 2012). Most meetings begin and end with prayers, many people I spoke with are motivated by Christian values, and in the hostel fellowship meetings take place weekly, but faith is noticeable more in spirit than in everyday activities (field notes, November 9, 2012). In the words of one YWCA member:

Having YWCA founded on the Christian faith and upholding those Christian values, it's a really good start. I think that's the beauty of all our work. We work with integrity and having concern for others. And having honesty and those kind of things (interview, October 18, 2012).

Adherence to Christian values is also reflected in the Guiding Values of YWCA Solomon Islands, which are: (1) “Leadership – embracing leadership values such as listening, serving, courage, caring, honesty, determination and good governance; (2) Faith – Trusting in God, celebrating diversity and respecting one another; (3) Creativity – In the way we use resources and approach challenges; (4) Integrity – Maintaining personal ethical principles; and (5) Empowerment – Encouraging women to reach their full potential” (YWCA Solomon Islands, 2009, p. 5). There is a marked difference between the specific religious language of the 1979 constitution and the 2009 values statement on faith, which is much closer in spirit to the words of the YWCA member above. For the most part, Christian values in YWCA Solomon Islands parallel leadership values: listening, serving, caring, honesty, determination, good governance, celebrating diversity and respecting one another. Beyond a basis in faith, these leadership values are also reflective of traditional understandings of *painaha* leadership in Solomon Islands based on egalitarianism, reciprocity, servant leadership and mutual accountability (Pollard, 2006).

In YWCA Solomon Islands, young women from communities and cultures across Solomon Islands are seen as leaders, emerging leaders and potential leaders. Young women staff members, board members, and Rise Up! peer educators and volunteers are seen and treated as leaders whose skills will continue to grow and strengthen. Women over the age of thirty are similarly seen as leaders who will further develop their skills through leadership opportunities in the YWCA and in the wider community. While Rise Up! (and Sistas Savve) program participants are seen as emerging leaders whose skills are actively being developed. Young women members are seen as potential leaders whose development is supported by the value of empowerment and a mission to provide training and skills development, although not all members have opportunities for active involvement or leadership development. The exception

seems to be young women hostel tenants, who are often referred to as “girls” despite the fact that they are all over the age of eighteen and are seen as in need of support to become or remain “good girls”. Relationships between the YWCA and young women, including hostel tenants, will be explored further in Chapters 4 and 5.

Compared to other YWCAs across the world, YWCA Solomon Islands is one of the most successful at young women’s and intergenerational leadership. While YWCA Solomon Islands has many young women actively involved in board, staff and volunteer leadership, as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, half of YWCAs cannot meet the requirement of at least 25% young women on their boards of directors (World YWCA, unpublished). In fact, as will be discussed further in Chapter 5, YWCA Solomon Islands could be said to be meeting many of the standards in the new *YWCA Safe Spaces for Women and Girls* (World YWCA, 2013b) including Standard 2: Leadership and participation, Standard 6: Intergenerational cooperation, and Standard 7: Dignity and respect. Other YWCAs that have difficulty attracting young women, or who have young women involved as program beneficiaries but not in organizational leadership, are not yet at the level of being safe spaces for young women’s leadership. YWCA Solomon Islands, with its feminist rights-based approach, can be seen as a role model for other YWCAs.

Discussion of YWCA Solomon Islands’ feminist rights-based approach in Chapters 4 and 5 is based on several key concepts. First, decision-making is a collaborative, dialogue-based process of determining organizational policy and action. Respect is a term used to capture the totality of Christian and leadership values on which dialogue, policy and action are based at all levels of the organization. Members are women and young women aged eighteen and over who pay a small annual membership fee and who “wish to share in [the] work and fellowship” of the YWCA, including all board members, staff, volunteers, program participants and hostel tenants

(YWCA Solomon Islands, 1979). Mentioned several times already, the Rise Up! young women's leadership program is a peer education program in which young women peer educators deliver workshops on women's rights, human rights, leadership, gender, public speaking and social justice to build the capacity of young people in Solomon Islands communities to know and claim their rights and to take seriously their responsibility to respect the rights of others (YWCA Solomon Islands, 2011).

Chapter 4 will explore what YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach looks like in practice, how it has impacted young women's leadership inside the YWCA and is changing the material realities of young women's everyday lives, and challenges YWCA Solomon Islands is still working to overcome. Chapter 5 will highlight the Rise Up! young women's leadership program as an example of the feminist rights-based approach, call for the development of a new right to leadership, and explain the Y Intergenerational Leadership? Framework I have developed based on the work of YWCA Solomon Islands.

Chapter 4: Learning from YWCA Solomon Islands' Feminist Rights-Based Approach

YWCA Solomon Islands employs a feminist rights-based approach to young women's and intergenerational leadership. Although YWCA Solomon Islands does not officially use the language "rights-based", it can be said to employ a feminist rights-based approach as demonstrated by: (i) a commitment to power-sharing, equality and non-discrimination; (ii) participation as both a means and an end; (iii) a growing number of young women and women learning and claiming their rights; and (iv) the outcome of increased gender equality and fulfillment of women's rights. Following the 1999-2003 conflict, YWCA Solomon Islands was almost dormant. The membership of YWCA, along with new staff and board members, decided to rebuild an organization focused on shared power and young women's leadership. Since that time the organization has faced many challenges and implemented multiple strategies toward achieving power-sharing among young women and women with diverse intersectional identities, as well as greater fulfillment of rights. I was able to observe YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach first-hand during the weeks I spent living and working at the YWCA from September to December 2012.

YWCA Solomon Islands' Feminist Rights-Based Approach: Strategies

YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach is comprised of multiple strategies designed to support young women's leadership, including: (i) participation of diverse young women in leadership and decision-making, both within the YWCA and in their families and communities; (ii) space for young women to communicate their priorities and integration of those priorities into organization policy and programs; (iii) institutional supports for young women's leadership, including a culture of mentorship and opportunities for young women to

work in teams; (iv) support for young women to learn about and claim their rights; (v) a culture of power-sharing; (vi) growing community engagement, and (vii) advocacy on women's rights. While each of these strategies is significant, together they form a leadership model in which power-sharing among diverse young women and women is both entrenched and sustained, and through which the rights of diverse young women are fulfilled.

Participation of Young Women with Diverse Intersectional Identities at the Grassroots as Both a Means and an End

YWCA Solomon Islands is committed to young women's participation as equals, leaders and decision-makers at all levels, from governance to membership. On the board of directors young women aged thirty or under make up 44%, or four of nine board members. One additional board member was a young woman when elected to her first term but was elected a second time as a woman over thirty. Having a young woman Vice President ensures that young women are part of decision-making between board meetings as part of the Executive Committee. While numbers and formal positions provide a partial picture, the lived experiences of board members illuminate the realities of intergenerational leadership within the YWCA Solomon Islands board. One young woman board member explained that younger and older women bring different skills and experiences to the table, and each is valued for her contributions. She elaborated that while older women bring more experience, younger women equally contribute skills and knowledge from formal education opportunities that many older women would not have had:

...all the older people, the young people they learn from each other. The old people they have more experiences and we learn from them. We also use their experience to become leaders...So from there we learn from the leaders in the board, from their teaching. We listen to them and learn to become leaders, following their examples...Also older women learn from the young women. Now more young women are educated, have done further studies, and share their skills with older women. So the older women also learn from the young women. Communication skills are also improved in our culture so I think it's good that every time young and old women work together. In church programs and

communities in rural areas, now older people recognize young people in decision-making. For example, in our church now young people are involved in leadership and take responsibilities. Now the old people encourage young people to take responsibility and do activities that help their communities. With improvements in technology, when the old people need information, young people will find information for them. Therefore, young and old people must always work together in every organization, in villages and churches. Young people should also be involved in decision making with the old people (interview, November 4, 2012).

Older and younger women on the YWCA Solomon Islands board share leadership through sharing knowledge, skills, questions and ideas. For example while the Treasurer is a woman over thirty and a former General Secretary of YWCA Solomon Islands, the other Finance Committee member is a young woman who took accounting in school and is employed in accounting. Together, they share equally in overseeing the organization's finances, developing finance policies, and working with staff to ensure a financially healthy organization (YWCA member, interview, November 4, 2012). As well, at each board meeting, the President verbally reminds the board of its commitment to sharing space and power among older and younger women. During board meetings, the President asks young women board members for their thoughts, ideas and questions if she feels that the discussion is being dominated by older women. One board meeting participant explains:

I think from my experience I would say that the current board actually [tries] to encourage the young women to participate. So whenever we discuss an issue the President would normally ask, "Okay, what do you think [name] or [name] or [name]?" So even if the older women are sometimes very vocal, more than the younger ones, but still the younger ones are encouraged. They are given space to say what's their perspective on that issue... They have been encouraged to actually say what their perspective on certain issues is... (interview, October 18, 2012).

An environment that supports equal participation by younger and older women board members is different from the past, when young women made up a smaller percentage of the board and were not specifically given space, nor encouraged to contribute to decision-making. In 2003 there was one young woman on the board, and she stopped coming to meetings likely

because it became evident that power was held by a very small group of board members (YWCA member, interview, October 22, 2012). In 2005, young women elected to the board were not able to participate as equal partners in leadership and decision-making. In contrast, interviews with current young women board members tell a story of intergenerational leadership. One research participant highlighted the marked contrast between power dynamics in the past and those of the board today:

But talking in terms of relationships with the board, the environment [in 2003] wasn't good at all for any [young women's leadership]. When finally we got the AGM [in 2005], there was, I think, a number of young women they came on the board. But I don't know. I really don't know. But what I notice was maybe the environment, I could be wrong, but maybe the environment wasn't free enough for them to contribute to discussion. I'm referring to the old board here; there were about four young women in that board. And not only that, their absenteeism. They were absent a number of times without giving reasons why they were absent. Probably it was because the environment wasn't that free for them to contribute. That was one reason. Or, they just didn't take their membership on the board seriously. They prioritized other things over their commitment to the board. I mean, I didn't get to ask those questions specifically to them. But generally the old President sort of raised that during board meetings. One or two meetings, she said, "I realize that the commitment from our young board members is not really strong." She said that once. I recall she said that once when all 4 of them didn't turn up. But from observation maybe the next board meeting a couple of them didn't turn up. And the next one. Just like that. So, I mean, like I said, there might be several other factors to that. But she really tried her best to really make them, at least give them a space where they could [contribute], but it did not [happen]. As compared to the board now, I see them really contribute freely to the board meeting. I don't know. Maybe it is the approach from the President as well. The current President she, every board meeting she emphasizes on that. She wants everybody to discuss freely, "Don't hold back anything. You have good ideas. And any idea, you might think it's foolish but we need to share those ideas. It might be the wisest idea ever on Earth but you might be too shy to just share it." So she keeps on saying that all the time. So I see a difference. Sometimes they are more vocal than the rest of us during some board meetings (interview, October 22, 2012).

At the board meetings I observed, young women board and staff members were active participants in discussions and decision-making. During the meeting to review proposed changes to the constitution, there was a discussion about the possibility of changing the description of who is eligible to become a board member from women and young women who "shall as far as

possible be representative of the different races, ages, classes and local groups within communities served by the Association” to women and young women who “shall as far as possible be representative of the different races, ages, classes, *faiths* and local groups within communities served by the Association” (field notes, November 10, 2012). One of the older women board members at the meeting spoke against including women of different faiths, stating that it could be a threat to the Christian basis and values of the association to have a multi-faith board. One of the young woman staff members responded passionately, and influenced the board to decide that the proposed draft constitution would allow women of all faiths to sit on the board:

But what it would be like if Parliament was like that? You know? What if in Solomon Islands Parliament only one kind of person was there? Like, if we weren’t allowed because of our village, our Province? What if women weren’t allowed to be in Parliament, *olsem*? YWCA is for *all* women in Solomon Islands. YWCA *blo everi woman*. And *all* women should be allowed on board. Not just like *we* make decisions and *they* can be members. No, any woman, Muslim woman, Jewish woman, any woman could be a board member. We don’t exclude, like Parliament *olsem* (field notes, November 10, 2012).

In such discussions power is revealed as discourse, exposing processes by which people gain access to power and responding to Kothari’s (2001) concerns about the limits of participation. The impact of the YWCA Solomon Islands board consciously creating space for young women to participate as equals in leadership and decision-making can be seen at both the individual and the organizational levels. Young women board members report that their leadership practice has been deepened and strengthened as a result of their experiences with the YWCA. These experiences include: (i) Executive Committee and Finance Committee positions; (ii) participation in international trainings on sexual and reproductive health and rights, HIV, violence against women; (iii) participation in the creation of the YWCA Pacific Young Women’s Leadership Strategy; and (iv) opportunities to advocate to Solomon Islands Government and other Pacific governments for gender equality and women’s rights. Young women then build on

their experiences by actively participating as leaders and decision-makers within the organization, in communities, and at the national level. One board member explains that young women board members are actively involved in influencing change in their home villages by encouraging other young women to claim their right to participate in community decisions that impact themselves and their families:

Women and young women see that they are not just women that are involved in village roles. They are leaders themselves in their families. They are able to make, and are making, decisions in their families. They are able to speak out, to voice out their views during meetings with the chiefs, with the leaders in the village, helping them to know and make changes. One of the changes is that, and this happens mostly in Malaita¹⁵ [*sic*], in meetings women are not allowed so much to speak out. Only the men can speak out. But now having all these young women able to attend all these trainings, coming over to YWCA, they go: "it's my human rights. I have the freedom to speak. I am going to speak out. I am not happy about the situation. It's not fair. We don't need to do it this way. Can we do these things another way, so we can be involved?" So I think these young women and board members have been able to do this back in the villages, telling these young women that your role is not only at home. You are leaders yourself in your family and community, so speak out. If you are not happy with what a man is doing, speak out. So I think they have been doing that...

And issues, women's issues that no one is speaking about. Helping these young women to see that it's very important, in the village, just like anybody. Helping them to see that they are not only village people but they are all citizens. Helping them to see that the government should help all of us, all citizens, from the village right up... And helping to see that access to medical, access to homes, access to listen to the news, access to meet the basic needs are important for them. Helping them to see how important they are as well. Helping to build them up that they are not someone else's decision. They are very important. Yes you are important as a mother in the family but you are a leader yourself, you have knowledge, you are able to make decisions with your family, so you make decisions and you make good decisions. This is something that young board members are able to do (interview, October 10, 2012).

The board member's words above demonstrate the YWCA's value of "encouraging women to reach their full potential" and the belief that all women and young women are equal in citizenship and in rights (YWCA Solomon Islands, 2009, p. 5). Rather than supporting the leadership of only those women and young women with higher socio-economic status or tertiary

¹⁵ During my research, women and young women from at least five provinces in Solomon Islands described public meetings in their communities as being dominated or exclusively attended by men.

education, YWCA Solomon Islands actively influences space for diverse young women, including those in villages, to claim their right to leadership and decision-making. While the YWCA does not have the capacity to reach many of the rural areas of Solomon Islands, the organization's commitment to equality and non-discrimination opens space for women and young women living in rural Solomon Islands who can access the YWCA to participate in the organization as equals.

At YWCA Solomon Islands, intergenerational power-sharing through the active creation of space for young women and older women to share their priorities with one another is often called "respect". When the YWCA adopts young women's priorities, as evidenced on the board, "respect" is being practiced. As one board member explains, the "respect" approach is a strength of YWCA Solomon Islands:

One of the strengths is respect; we respect each other. I think the other thing is that, like, we have these young women who take up these leadership roles so one of the things is we create opportunities for young women to take up leadership roles and we trust and respect them. At the same time we build. We train them and we build their confidence and give them as much space as possible to be creative and come up with their ideas. And in terms of training, we keep opportunities for everyone (interview, October 10, 2012).

In some women's organizations, young women are allowed entry only to be relegated to making coffee or are called upon for input only in discussions about "youth issues" (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000; former World YWCA and YWCA Canada board member, interview, March 22, 2013). In contrast, YWCA Solomon Islands is known for empowering young women to fully contribute their skills, knowledge and experience while continuing to develop their leadership. This includes both the formal leadership positions young women hold: Vice President, Finance Committee member, General Secretary, Programs Manager, Finance and Admin Officer, Acting Coordinator Munda Branch; as well as informal leadership opportunities young women take up.

In addition, at YWCA Solomon Islands it is not elite women who become members and leaders in the organization but diverse grassroots young women. Ten of thirteen paid and volunteer staff in the YWCA office in Honiara are young women. Two staff members are young women who have children and are not married, although in most Solomon Islands societies unmarried women who become pregnant are ostracized and excluded (YWCA staff member, interview, November 5, 2012). Most board and staff members have themselves moved to Honiara from rural villages and identify their villages as home, rather than places that they have progressed beyond or left behind. Although most board members and all paid staff members have paid employment, a very small number would be considered socio-economically privileged. In fact in order to meet basic living expenses, most young women and women I met in Solomon Islands engage in income-generating activities including selling homemade food, crafts, or mobile telephone credit whether or not they also have paid employment. Young women and women of diverse ethnicities come together in the YWCA, and no one group is dominant over others. Board and staff members come from at least five of nine provinces, while members come from all nine provinces. YWCA members have varying levels of formal education, with two staff members in the office in Honiara having completed university while two were sponsored by the Solomon Islands Government to attend Community Development Training in Fiji that is specifically for young women who did not complete secondary school.

YWCA Solomon Islands' commitment to the human rights principles of participation, non-discrimination, equality and accountability has led to the election of five current board members who are former program participants, one hostel tenant, and one former staff member. As well, two current paid staff members were program participants and all unpaid staff members were program participants. There is no dichotomy between young women who are eligible to be

program participants and young women who are eligible to hold leadership positions. For example, many young women staff were hired without relevant employment experience and/or education and have learned on the job and through professional development opportunities. Significant diversity within YWCA Solomon Islands fosters flexibility, creativity and innovation as people learn individually and together. Two young women staff members explain what this has meant for them:

I like the work environment. I like working with other young women. And here I have been allowed to make decisions and things which, if I had gone to another organization, I wouldn't have been allowed that opportunity. Because, when I came here there wasn't much of a young women's program. And one of the things I really love doing is coming up with these ideas. So when I came here, I realized that here I could do that. I could say this is what I want to do and people will listen to me. And I knew that if I stayed here I would gain more experience than if I went somewhere else. If I went to a much better-paying organization then I would be, you know, just doing this work and I wouldn't have experience in other areas like what I get to do. Like here I have done stuff in communications, I am playing a management role for other staff, and at times I also do work which other staff are doing... I have no experience in finances and I learned to do that here. And I think because all the other staff are also young women, we have been really supportive of each other and we help each other a lot. That is one of the reasons why I have stayed this long here (interview, November 5, 2012).

I really like this place because through working here, I have access to attend meetings with other NGOs, build a broader network with other NGOs, and involve in trainings. Because I know one of [the YWCA's] main priorities is capacity-building. So this is the first place where they expose me out. And I learn a lot here. It is true that I learn a lot. Mainly on...my area of work here.... So when I came here I would say it's a blessing for me. Because I have access to trainings and besides I have consultant come and sit directly with me in the office and actually do the work in the office with me. And this is the first time I have worked with Auditors to screen all those financial systems and how we do things. So to me it's the first experience working directly with Auditors and liaising with them (interview, October 30, 2012).

Despite many successes, YWCA Solomon Islands faces challenges to full implementation of participation as both a means and an end. One important challenge is the relationship between some young women who are not seen as “good girls” and some older

women who are judgemental about their behaviour and choices. This challenge can be a profoundly disempowering experience for some young women.

Challenge: A Question of Judgement: Good Girls, Bad Girls and Power

There is a strong dynamic in Solomon Islands of what one young women's blog, Feminist Fatale.com, calls the "good girl/bad girl" or "Madonna/whore dichotomy" (Klein, February 25, 2010). Good girls abide by prevailing social mores, attend Church, and wait until they are married to have a relationship with a man. Bad girls may drink, go to clubs, have sex outside of marriage, and are believed to be a bad influence on other young women. This view can be extreme, as in the words of one board member:

Because there are lots of young women around the schools, in town, even at night if you go out to the nightclub, there are lots of young women out there at night running around. And these people, I think that they don't know they have rights. I mean, they don't know about their rights. So this is why they think that they are useless. But they are important. They should know their rights. So I think it's one of the areas that YWCA really needs to take up and take a lead on...One of the impacts is teenage pregnancy. And the rate for STIs. I don't know what's the rate in Solomon Islands but it's very high. So girls and women need to understand their bodies and they need to understand how to make the right choices in life. Because if not they could end up becoming pregnant or having STIs. Even HIV and AIDS is becoming higher rate in Solomon Islands. And most times you feel disempowered. And most of these girls, not only girls but women, they become prostitutes [*sic*]. And if you go out to the garden, like there is a garden next to SIBC, there are lots of young women and girls there. Most of them are students so they go out there at night. Even during the daytime some just stay there. They don't go back to their homes. So what they do is they go out. They do that for a living. They have to do that to buy food for themselves, clothes. And most of them, they enjoy doing it because nobody has talked to them. And they think that it's good but it's not good. It's not good for their bodies. It's not good for their health. And in Solomon Islands we hold our culture very strong so it brings a bad negative image to their family (interview, October 10, 2012).

It is true that in Solomon Islands the rates of transactional sex are on the rise, as more and more young women face limited educational and economic opportunities (Joint NGOs Group, 2012, p. 21). However, the links this board member has made between being unaware of one's rights, going to nightclubs, enjoying sex work, and bringing a bad image to one's family are

more about judging the behaviour of so-called “bad girls” than about a rights-based approach. While there is some sense, when the board member says, “but they are important, they should know their rights,” that the young women in question might not be “bad girls” forever, at the same time there is judgement about young women who are seen as shaming their families and themselves.

The judgement of young women who are seen as “bad girls” impacts their participation in the YWCA as an organization, as well as their participation in broader political and public life. One young woman staff member talked about her experience of being judged as a “bad girl”, and the implications it has for both her job and her future. She said that she very much wants to run as a Member of Parliament, but knows that she would not be supported by her community because of her past behaviour. She also talked about the way she is treated inside the YWCA, and explained that even though she is respected in her staff role she is simultaneously disrespected for the choices she makes about her private life and personal time:

I guess, as I have mentioned, we [young women] are given the space to grow and to develop. Sometimes I feel, only at times not all the time, that we are given a lot of space, but at times I feel there is, you know, pressure, a bit of pressure. Like the expectations, especially from the community, and from above, by which I mean the board. Because I am young and I sometimes do crazy stuff. At times I feel that being young and working in this kind of organization, with the "C" in Christian, I tend to get criticism if I do not conform to what is expected from society; the way in which I *should* behave...

There are some really good relationships [between older and younger women at YWCA Solomon Islands]. There are really supportive women who really believe in what we do. You mean inside the organization? OK, they believe in what the organization is doing. They are passionate. They are very supportive of the young women who work here. But sometimes I feel that they have forgotten what it is like to be young. So, when you are young you do some things which when you are older you look back and say, “that wasn't a very good thing to do”. But, I don't know how to put it. Some of them, I guess those who were very churchy, they criticize more. Those ones who are, like, just in between, they are the ones who I feel understand us more, don't criticize as much... *olketa savve*, especially the board members, *olketa savve* that if action when we *doim hem* not destroy but *spoilem reputation lo organization* and *olsem*? And also *tok* with them. So in that way, *olketa* never come directly to me because they know which channel is the right one

to go to. But there have been times when it's my personal life and they tend to say [negative] things (interview, November 5, 2012).

This young woman staff member highlights the challenges of a small number of “churchy” older women judging some young women based on behaviour. She specifically connects the judgement to the older women’s practice of Christianity. While YWCA Solomon Islands understands itself as an organization based on Christian values rather than as a religious organization, at times members bring particular understandings of Christianity which are incompatible with both YWCA Solomon Islands’ feminist rights-based approach and the value of faith articulated as “trusting in God, celebrating diversity and respecting one another” (YWCA Solomon Islands, 2009, p. 5). Two key learnings arise from this challenge. One is the importance of differentiating organizational priorities from the priorities of particular individuals within an organization when investigating rights-based approaches. The second is the disempowering impact the behaviour of particular individuals can have on others even within organizations that practice feminist rights-based approaches. This highlights the importance of monitoring and evaluating whether and how diverse young women are included/excluded and empowered/disempowered in women’s organizations.

Participation as an End: Beyond the YWCA

Young women board and staff members at YWCA are using their leadership skills to contribute to the fulfillment of rights in their communities. Many volunteer in formal or informal roles with women’s groups, church groups and community groups to support leadership capacity among young women and women who do not have opportunities to participate in YWCA programs. This extension of the feminist rights-based approach sees board and staff members taking what they learn through the YWCA and teaching other young women and women in their

communities. For example, two staff members are helping women in their communities to find jobs:

Like with regards to women. Since I came to work here, I always look at women in my community. Sometimes they feel scared to go to ask for jobs. And just last month, I think, I took some of those women because I feel sorry for them because they don't have confidence in going out and finding jobs. So during the job fair, because I am one of the member of the Solomon Islands Women in Business, I took them there. I said, "look here. If you are going to sit here in the community we will have nothing. You should go out and seek for jobs." So I took them out to the multi and we went and seek jobs for them. So with the feeling that I have for women, working in a women's organization, I want to contribute in other parts. Like, working in other community groups. So now I was thinking of gathering our women down in our community and doing something that would benefit them. At least we should share our knowledge and skills and small things that we have (interview, October 30, 2012).

And I help other young women in my community. They don't have jobs. They need money but they don't have jobs. They want jobs at maybe at the hotel or maybe anywhere, but they can't write letters. They only went to Form 3 at school, maybe, or a bit higher. And they didn't learn to write letters so they can't apply for jobs. So I help the young women. I write letters for them. Some got the jobs; one at the hotel down there (interview, September 26, 2012).

Another staff member is helping her community to found a local women's association. She explains that because of her role in YWCA, she is seen as a leader in her community and was asked to take a leadership role in the new women's association. Even though she was unable to accept that role, she supports the rights of women in her community to organize and to be more active participants in political and public life:

But now when I go to our [ethnic] community, they say, "oh, you are a good example to us, the young women." They have been reading the newspaper, the articles they wrote about me and the exposures I have had. They say, "this is really something for a young woman [from our ethnic group] to be leading like this." So, I feel valued and I feel respected when they say it. And then we started to form a[n ethnic group] women's association. Two weeks ago, we had a fundraising drive. And they said, "you should be the one coordinating. You should be the President of the Committee." I said, "no, I'm not." They appointed a Committee, but I'm not part of the committee. But those people who attended, when they appointed an interim committee, they said, "we believe in you." I said, "wow. It doesn't matter still I'm not part of the Committee, but still I'm supporting the association to exist. [They said] "No no no, we want you to." I said, "really?" I don't

see myself as that, but they see it from there. So I think it's part of exercising the women's rights (interview, October 29, 2012).

The YWCA Solomon Islands' model of young women's leadership has been recognized outside of the YWCA movement. The Pacific Leadership Program has provided funding to write a case study of the Rise Up! program as an example of leading practice in young women's leadership. Staff of the Women's Development Division praise the YWCA for their work with young women, and for filling a gap left by other women's organizations in Solomon Islands that exclude young women. As well, two staff members of YWCA Solomon Islands were among the original 18 young women invited by the United Nations Development Program to participate in the first phase of the Young Women's Parliamentary Group. One staff member has been invited to participate, as one of two youth representatives in the country, in the drafting of the new Solomon Islands federal constitution. As well, one staff member has been selected as a Solomon Islands NGO representative to present an oral statement to the CEDAW Committee in 2014.

YWCA Solomon Islands prioritizes the participation of young women as both a means and an end. Young women not only share leadership and decision-making within the YWCA, but are empowered and supported to make decisions within their families, Churches and communities. One important characteristic of YWCA Solomon Islands' leadership model is that it allows for both young women's leadership as well as intergenerational leadership, addressing the generational aspect of intersectionality. YWCA Solomon Islands has neither tokenized young women nor become a youth-only organization, but includes multiple generations of women in leadership and membership paralleling the priorities of young feminists and the *Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminists* (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000; African Feminist Forum, 2006; Horn, 2009). YWCA members are, in turn, taking what they have learned and working to increase the fulfillment of rights in their communities, at the national level, and

through international policy. YWCA Solomon Islands contributes to this work by supporting young women to identify and articulate their priorities.

Space for Young Women to Articulate their Priorities and Organizational Responsiveness

YWCA Solomon Islands creates space for young women to share their priorities both within exclusively young women's spaces and within intergenerational spaces. In the previous section, the creation of space for young women's priorities within board meetings and processes was explored. Chapter 3 described the creation of spaces for young women to articulate their priorities and goals through a Participatory Learning Technique and how the YWCA responded with the Rise Up! program. In the next section, I will explain how young women teams are yet another mechanism through which young women can articulate their priorities. While Chapter 5 will talk about how the Rise Up! program continues to provide space for young women to share their priorities, and for those priorities to influence the YWCA's planning and programs. This section will discuss the space provided by the YWCA for young women to articulate their priorities through the process of developing the NGO Shadow Report to CEDAW, as well as the YWCA's response to those priorities.

In October 2012, YWCA Solomon Islands participated in the development of the Solomon Islands NGO Shadow Report to CEDAW. I was a member of the eight-person participating YWCA team along with one staff member, one Rise Up! peer educator, two program participants, two volunteers and one YWCA member. Throughout the four-day CEDAW workshop offered by the Women's Rights Action Movement, and subsequent meetings, the four YWCA young women shared stories about their lives and communities, raised concerns about power and gender inequalities, conducted research on supporting facts, and

articulated their priorities for the NGO Shadow Report as well as further action by YWCA Solomon Islands (field notes, October 12, 2012).

After much discussion, we agreed that the YWCA would contribute information under CEDAW Article 1 on discrimination, Article 5 on sex role stereotyping and harmful traditional practices, and Article 10 on education. While I was absent for the workshop for two hours to conduct a research interview, the YWCA team decided to write about the specific topics of: (i) Article 1: land ownership and inheritance, divorce and matrimonial property legislation, early termination of pregnancy (abortion), rape (including marital rape), and same sex relationships; (ii) Article 5: bride price, early and forced marriage, and unpaid work in the home and child-rearing; and (iii) Article 10: comprehensive sexuality education, Solomon Islands Government tertiary school scholarships, sex roles and stereotypes in education, human rights education, and civic education. With the topics selected, it was time to discuss the issues and divide research and follow-up responsibilities (field notes, October 9, 2012).

On the topic of land ownership and inheritance, one young woman told the story of a woman she knew who was unable to access the income from *kastom* land she had inherited in Guadalcanal province. She explained that the woman's husband physically collects the royalty cheques from the corporation that buys and refines the palm oil, cashes the cheques, and retains sole decision-making power over how the money is spent (field notes, October 11, 2012).

Another young woman described how women and young women are silenced and excluded during community land use meetings. The group acknowledged that some Rise Up! participants are building the confidence to voice their concerns about the impacts of logging on *kastom* land (field notes, October 11, 2012). While no one indicated that they thought the YWCA should take up land inheritance as an organizational priority, there was definitely agreement that through the

YWCA young women should be empowered to claim their rights, including land rights, in their communities.

Another young woman talked about the barriers to reporting domestic violence or rape to the police, or even family members. She said that women are discouraged from charging their husbands with domestic violence, and she knew of at least one case where a young woman trying to report violence was told by the police that she should go home and try harder not to provoke her husband. She added that many young women and older women are unaware that they have a right to freedom from domestic violence, partly because it is accepted as a common part of life in Solomon Islands. The group discussed what the YWCA could do about domestic violence, and agreed that hosting activities during both the YWCA Week Without Violence and the YWCA-YMCA Week of Prayer, themed Violence Will Not Have the Last Word in 2012, were ways that the YWCA could engage this priority. As well, the Rise Up! peer educator said that Rise Up! workshops were an example of how the YWCA is already addressing the right to freedom from violence (field notes, October 12, 2012). In response, during the Week of Prayer the YWCA hosted a fellowship service that specifically addressed domestic violence and invited members and the local community to attend. In addition, YWCA staff participated as part of the Women's Development Division organizing committee for the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence.

On the topic of same sex relationships, one young woman said that while in her community people in same sex relationships are accepted, in many parts of Solomon Islands such relationships are not tolerated and remain hidden for safety reasons. She pointed out that it is not safe for people in same sex relationships to openly talk about their lives when accessing health services and said that even sexual health services would not have specific information

about how to prevent STIs or HIV. She added that people in same sex relationships are probably at increased risk of violence because it is not safe to disclose their sexual orientation or report violence by same sex partners (field notes, October 11, 2012). This young woman said that when the YWCA offers sexual and reproductive health information, as it does in Munda, it is important that it is a safe space for youth in same sex relationships.

On the topic of early and forced marriage, the same young woman told the story of a young woman from her home constituency who was forced into early marriage. She explained that the Member of Parliament (MP) wanted to marry a fourteen year-old girl, and he paid her parents a large sum of money to sign documentation stating that she was actually twenty years of age. She added that once the marriage took place it became impossible to approach the MP about changing the law to make marriage for persons under the age of eighteen illegal (field notes, October 11, 2012). The group agreed that the YWCA could address this issue as part of broader work on violence against women and girls.

A final story that was told by one of the young women participants concerned inequalities in education. She said that once girls or young women become pregnant, they are forced to leave secondary school and are unable to return to school after the birth. She explained that this is a barrier to education for many girls and young women across Solomon Islands who then become even more dependent on their families to support them. She stated that it is discriminatory for schools to force young women to leave school because of pregnancy and to prevent young women from returning to school later on, adding that even if young women try to attend a different school they will be turned away (field notes, October 12, 2012). Subsequent to the shadow reporting process the staff of YWCA Solomon Islands decided to take up this issue, tied

to public education around CEDAW, in its first official advocacy campaign (field notes, October 31, 2012).

The decision of the YWCA to support such a large team to participate in the shadow reporting process created space for young women to voice their priorities and concerns related to the rights of women, young women and girls. This both created opportunities for young women to contribute to the NGO report that will be reviewed by the CEDAW Committee (which has been rescheduled to 2014), and for young women to talk about how they wanted the YWCA to respond to their priorities. As a result, the YWCA held a community church service on the theme of domestic violence, participated in the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence, and made the decision to develop an advocacy campaign around CEDAW and removing barriers to secondary education for girls and young women who become, or have been, pregnant. As well, Rise Up! workshops continue to build young women's capacity to know and claim their rights, as will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

YWCA Solomon Islands creates both young women only spaces, such as the Rise Up! program, as well as intergenerational spaces, such as the shadowing reporting team, where young women identify and articulate their priorities. In intergenerational spaces YWCA Solomon Islands deliberately practices intergenerational leadership, defined by one young woman YWCA Solomon Islands member as different generations of women: "...actually contributing, working together...respecting each other's views and at least giving the space to each other to share views, experiences" (interview, October 18, 2012). Young women are not segregated, but integrated as fundamental partners in the activities, growth and development of the organization. This helps to allay fears on the part of younger women that they will be tokenized, and fears of older women that they will be pushed out of an organization that they helped to create and build.

It also addresses Mudlair's concerns that the agenda in intergenerational spaces is often pre-determined by older women (in Horn, 2009). Within intergenerational spaces at YWCA Solomon Islands, young women are empowered to share their priorities and work together with older women to integrate those priorities into the organization's policy, plans and programs. According to one World YWCA member, one benefit of having an intergenerational organisation rather than a young women only organization is the opportunity to address power and to create spaces in which to share power:

...I heard this language "intergenerational leadership" and at first I thought, "oh, this is a cop-out." You know, where we are trying to appease the older women who feel excluded. And I would say that some of that was initially, some of the motivation for using the "intergenerational" language and "shared" language was a desire to make sure that everyone felt included. Because I think there was some push-back that the focus on young women was making older women feel excluded... But I think that the approach, though, and something we have seen in all of our training programs and particularly our evaluations we have done over the last few years, is that for young women to succeed there needs to be sufficient support structures. And that unless we bring, unless we make sure that there are mentors, and that could be mentors of the same age, younger, older, it's not really an issue of age but sort of the idea of mentoring, unless we also bring the other leaders along with us young women aren't going to flourish. Because, you know, if our older leaders are feeling disempowered they will be manipulating power with young women. So I think the idea is to take everyone forward together to continue to say that young women's leadership is our priority and is our focus but to make sure we are bringing along all women together. That we are also promoting this idea of sharing leadership across ages and recognizing the value and of everyone and everyone's perspective so that, you know, even the 70 year old vs. the 24 year old and we recognize the inherent value of everyone. So I think it's about a more inclusive approach and also an approach that recognizes the importance of support from other generations for young women to flourish. And a way that we keep everyone connected and that we are truly a women's organization that can accommodate everyone... I also think that a focus on shared leadership opens up more space to talk about how you share power, how you share and manage organizations between volunteers and staff, between young women and older women. So I think it has opened up more space for dialogue whereas when you only have the focus on young women it's all, it becomes all about recruiting and getting young women onto the board without addressing those broader power dynamics that happen (interview, July 23, 2013).

At YWCA Solomon Islands intergenerational power-sharing is not only practiced, but has been institutionalized. Building on a strong commitment to the human rights principles of

non-discrimination and participation, YWCA Solomon Islands has implemented policy that has shifted the organizational culture to reflect the commitments in the *Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminists* to subjectivity, agency, responsible use of power and authority, as well as “power-sharing across generations” (African Feminist Forum, 2006, p. 13). In turn, institutional supports enhance YWCA Solomon Islands’ responsiveness to young women’s priorities and accountability to young women as a constituency. Another way that YWCA Solomon Islands supports young women to articulate their priorities is through institutional supports for young women’s leadership development.

Institutional Supports Build Capacity for Young Women’s Leadership

Another strategy of YWCA Solomon Islands’ feminist rights-based approach is the implementation of institutional supports for young women’s leadership. One such support is the provision in the constitution that “at least 25% of the board members should be under 30 years of age” (YWCA Solomon Islands, 1979, Article 5). Ahmed’s (2006) “ethnography of texts” highlights the importance of YWCA Solomon Islands performing intergenerational equality, rather than considering policy a substitute for action. Although the constitution has not always been followed, since 2007 YWCA Solomon Islands has had at least 40% young women board members and the new draft constitution upholds the commitment to include young women board members (field notes, November 10, 2012). Another institutional support for young women’s leadership is the current Strategic Plan, including the vision, mission and values, described in Chapter 3.

The budget of YWCA Solomon Islands is an additional institutional support, containing significant funding for leadership development and capacity-building of young women. For example, in 2012 one young woman staff received a scholarship from the Solomon Islands

Government to take an eight-month post-secondary training on Community Development in Fiji. During that training course, the staff member continued to receive 50% of her wages to help cover the cost of living away from home (YWCA staff member, personal communication, September 19, 2012). Such a strong financial commitment to building young women's leadership is uncommon in the budgets of women's organizations. While YWCA Solomon Islands has a small budget, spending decisions are made based on the vision and mission of the organization. Supporting young women to participate in training is relevant to multiple components of the mission including capacity-building, inclusion, and effective governance and management.

The Human Resources policies of YWCA Solomon Islands also support young women's leadership. One of the new draft policies, scheduled to be adopted in 2013, is the *Equal Opportunity for Women and Young Women in the Workplace Policy*. Adapted from the *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace* policy at another Solomon Islands NGO, this new draft policy will institutionalize equality for young women staff, stating "[e]qual opportunity for women and young women in the workplace means taking proactive measures to ensure that women and young women achieve equal employment opportunities, with the aim of removing barriers that have historically prevented women and young women from achieving equality" (YWCA Solomon Islands, unpublished). This is particularly significant in light of Mishra and Singh's (2007) comments about how power in women's organizations is typically concentrated in the hands of one matriarch.

A Culture of Mentorship

YWCA Solomon Islands also supports young women's leadership through a culture of mentorship, which furthers the mission by contributing to capacity-building. Board members, staff members, volunteers and members of YWCA Solomon Islands talk about mentorship as an

important part of achieving the vision of YWCA Solomon Islands. Mentorship is understood to benefit all parties to the mentorship relationship, and is practiced informally in many day-to-day interactions. For example, one young woman staff described the way in which she mentors volunteers and one volunteer described a similar understanding of her mentorship relationship with the staff person:

My way of working with someone younger than me and someone less experienced than me would be, “Okay you go. This is your task. Go and do it, and if you meet a challenge then come back to me.” And that's what usually happens. They come back and ask, “how do I do this?” And so I sit with them and actually show them, “this can be one way you can do it.” Or I tell them try that way and come back and tell me how it's going. Or sometimes they send me something through email and I'm like, “oh, that wasn't exactly what I wanted. How about I show you what I wanted and then we sit down together? So, this is how you draw the lines on your Excel spreadsheet.” So I am very one-on-one... I guess a lot of us working here are working here because we want to see the change, and because it's a passion for us (YWCA Solomon Islands staff member, interview, November 5, 2012).

And she always encouraged me...She always empowers me to rise more. Not rise up. Rise more. And also [name] empowers me more and more. And I thank [her] because she always [helps], when I ask for help. I asked her to make a budget for me. She said, “no, you can make your own budget.” But I never knew how to make my own budget. So I asked [her] and I asked [another staff member] and [she] said to [the other staff member], “don't give her a budget. She can make her own budget”. So I did it and I showed it to [her]. She said, “you are very good, excellent.” And then I am so happy (YWCA Solomon Islands peer educator, group interview, November 6, 2012).

Early one morning, another staff member described a challenging situation she was having with a colleague. She said that her colleague was not contributing equally on the staff team, and that she was frustrated about this situation. She was upset, and feeling pressured to complete the bulk of the work herself outside of work hours. I'm not sure what I expected her to say next, but to my great surprise she turned the conversation to mentorship. She said, “I know what I will do. I will mentor [my colleague]. I will be a good example and [my colleague] will see that this is the right way to work. I will not become angry. I will do the work and mentor [my colleague] with my example” (field notes, October 27, 2013). The profound commitment to

mentorship at YWCA Solomon Islands is related to a belief or understanding that building young women teams within the organization is a strategy that allows young women to support and learn from one another, building each other's skills and knowledge.

Young Women Teams

Young women teams create space for young women to be both subjects and agents in the young women's leadership work of YWCA Solomon Islands. Instead of treating young Solomon Islands women as "objects of charity and care" (Grewal, 2005, p. 130), YWCA Solomon Islands supports teams of young women to provide leadership. Young women are leaders not just on certain issues but as equal partners in organizational management and governance. Young women teams are one mechanism of accountability to the 70% of the YWCA's constituency that is under the age of twenty-nine. For example, as one young woman explains, a team of almost all young women staff rebuilt the YWCA after the conflict:

Firstly, looking at the organization: I think when I came here the organization had been dormant for a while...I'm grateful that I had a good team and we managed to actually raise up the profile of the organization again...It makes me proud because I think we all did a good job in actually revitalizing the organization and trying to make it a credible organization again after being quiet for a while. And also I think even though there are some issues between us at the office and the board, but the relationship is always maintained. Even though we find differences in terms of some of the work that we do, the relationship is maintained and that is a strength...With [the board's] continual support I think we managed to achieve a lot of things. So we did strengthen some of the systems in the management, in the operations side, and then also developed a strategic plan which has never been there, and we also developed some guidelines; procedural things to make it a more professional office. And I think through the work that we do with the team...we are not recognized only nationally but also internationally and regionally so that what I'm also proud of - my team...

It's a great experience for me. Because I learn a lot of things. I am good at my own stuff, like doing my reports, doing my budgets, planning, and all those things. But I'm not good at other areas, so other young women who are in the room are coming up with these great ideas of how can we do it - they are the experts. You know? So it's a learning for me as well. And coming to the older women as well, I think you know. We are gaining from their experience, learning from their broad knowledge because they have been in the

workforce so many years. I think it's a good combination. Because they bring in things; expand your brain and your sight. So what you might not see, they see it. And they bring it to the table and then we all, "Okay, so how are we going to handle this? And how are we going to approach this?" So it's a great experience for me and I love it. Because I am learning a lot from these two groups...Only then we can all work together to achieve something (interview, October 18, 2012).

Although contentious, there is a widely accepted notion that a critical mass of around 30% is needed for women in Politics to succeed at developing and implementing policy and programs that are reflective of women's priorities (Grey, 2006; O'Connor, 2010, p. 295). Women's Environment & Development Organization (WEDO) writes that the reason for this is that "when women are represented in a critical mass in policy-making bodies their perspectives and experiences are more likely to be taken into account, their concerns given higher priority, and action becomes possible" (2005, p. 1). For young women in women's organizations, the theory of critical mass means that it will take about 30% young women or more in leadership and decision-making to ensure that young women's priorities are taken into account and acted upon. In addition to a constitutional mandate that a critical mass of young women participate on the board of directors, YWCA Solomon Islands sustains the participation of a critical mass of young women leaders by supporting teams of young women staff and peer educators.

Young women teams at YWCA Solomon Islands not only engage significant numbers of young women, but also create safe spaces in which young women can identify and discuss their priorities. In addition to critical mass, Childs highlights the importance of having a "safe space" in politics within which to raise women's priorities defined as "an environment, either intellectual and/or physical, in which feminist criticism can be freely articulated" (2001, p. 178). The World YWCA emphasizes safe spaces as critical for young women's leadership development as well as organizational responsiveness to young women's priorities. Safe spaces are defined as "inclusive and empowering spaces for women and girls of all ages and in all their

diversity...[which] foster a sense of solidarity...” and include intergenerational leadership “based on respect and equality among different age groups with a focus on developing young women’s leadership”, (World YWCA, 2013b, p. 3, 5).

Young women teams at YWCA Solomon Islands empower one another to challenge social norms and cultural practices that function to keep women, young women and girls isolated in the home, as will be discussed in Chapter 5. They also develop innovative practices based on a commitment to performing democracy inside the YWCA. For example at the staff meeting on September 21, 2012 when the Kindergarten Coordinator reminded everyone of the need to identify an Acting Coordinator to cover her maternity leave, the General Secretary responded that the process should be democratic. She then asked the assembled staff to nominate potential Acting Coordinators. Three staff members were nominated, and two agreed to be considered for the position. The General Secretary asked nominees if they would be comfortable with a confidential vote as a decision-making process. Both nominees agreed. A confidential vote took place, and one of the candidates was selected as the new Acting Coordinator of the kindergarten (field notes, September 21, 2012).

The process of selecting the Acting Coordinator reflects YWCA Solomon Islands’ commitment to democracy, as well as the human rights principles of participation and transparency. It can be said that YWCA Solomon Islands is responsive to Mutua’s (2009) call for the cultivation and advancement of democracy within human rights NGOs. Rather than the decision being made behind closed doors by a small group holding decision-making power, the staff team was empowered to collectively decide on the Acting Coordinator. While this is the only time I saw such a process take place at YWCA Solomon Islands, it is significant both because the General Secretary deliberately engaged the staff in a democratic process and because

it embraced the principle of participation that is part of YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach.

Young women teams are also part of the culture in the YWCA hostel. There are three committees in the YWCA hostel. The Fellowship Committee plans and oversees the weekly worship meetings on Wednesday evenings. The Workline Committee organizes hostel residents into teams, and delegates maintenance and cleaning chores. The Fundraising Committee hosts fundraising events throughout the year to finance a party at the end of each year before people return home for the holidays. There is also an *ad hoc* committee that coordinates worship sessions on Tuesday evenings for children from the local community. Hostel tenants have the opportunity to nominate themselves or other tenants to sit on the committees, and a vote takes place at the end of each year to elect the committee members for the following year (YWCA member, interview, November 4, 2012). There are significant challenges to being a hostel committee member, including the time it takes on top of work and personal responsibilities, the lack of support among hostel tenants for committee leadership, and the lack of training for committee members. Despite the challenges, committee membership is a leadership development opportunity through which tenants learn new skills and mentor one another to be more confident leaders. As one hostel tenant explains:

It's very challenging because of communication breakdown, and delegation of tasks. No communication, no delegation, no communication. And no more meetings which means no more sharing. But we need to meet, to discuss and share. So for me that's a challenge...The other challenge is when you're in the committee you have decisions coming from the other group; those not in the committee...For example, after we put up the program, they came back and made complaints. And I said, "their complaints are good. They have their reasons. But let me tell us (Matron was also there) that we are the final decision-makers. We are the committee. They are only under us. They have the right to give complaints, criticisms, but the final decision will have to come from us. And we have to be strong"...So it comes to self-confidence to do that...We have characters that are manipulating, very influential. But as leaders you have to stand up for what you believe. Don't dwell on what other people think about you. But also you need to listen to

their complaints, weigh them, and have reasons [for your decisions]. That way, they will believe that you know what you're doing. They will realize. They will support you in the end. And that's the reality. They will eventually support you instead of complaining against you. They will be with you. That's the reality. So like today, even though I'm not in the committee, they still come to me and say blah blah blah and I am always there to advise them and guide them and say, "you are the boss. But also consider their complaints and look back, think about how your approach was and how the responses were. Don't forget that. As leaders we have to accept weaknesses, and we have to accept complaints, and if it's true we change it. If it's not true then you stand by [your decision]. But it's always good for you to share, and I'm always here for you to come and share" (interview, November 4, 2012).

At the same time power for decision-making about the hostel largely rests with the board, including through its own Hostel Committee which does not have tenant representation and is responsible for making recommendations to the board about meeting the needs and goals of hostel tenants and solving major conflicts within the hostel. While I was at YWCA Solomon Islands, discussion about clarifying governance and operational roles included the possibility of replacing the board committee with joint staff-tenant committee. If this new committee is established, it will support YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach by increasing tenant participation in leadership and decision-making about hostel policy and processes.

YWCA Solomon Islands is committed to building young women's capacity to participate as leaders and decision-makers in the organization, their communities, national processes, and the world. This is evident in the mission of the organization, as well as in practice. And it goes beyond capacity-building for board and staff members. Program participants are also seen as leaders in their families and communities, and potential leaders at other levels. For example, when YWCA Solomon Islands was rebuilding after the conflict, new staff attended the same young women's leadership training as young women program participants. Out of this training, program participants developed the Girls 4 Change project which was supported by the

Commonwealth Youth Programme. While young women staff worked with the facilitators of that initial training, FWRM, to develop the Rise Up! program. Rather than having one standard of training for staff and another for program participants, all young women were treated as equals. Each was supported to use that initial training to build both their own leadership and capacity to claim their rights, as well as that of other young women in their communities.

Young Women Knowing and Claiming Their Rights: ‘Power Within’

A key component of YWCA Solomon Islands’ feminist rights-based approach is building young women’s knowledge of their rights, as well as young women’s confidence to claim their rights. The best example of this process is the Rise Up! program, which will be discussed in Chapter 5. Another example is the creation of space on YWCA Solomon Islands’ board for a hostel tenant. Through participation on hostel committees, tenants became aware of their right to participate in decision-making in the YWCA. In the lead-up to the AGM in 2009, hostel tenants began to talk about how their concerns were not being raised at the board table and how the organization was not responding to their priorities. They decided to nominate a hostel tenant to the board of directors who could effectively advocate for the needs and goals of hostel tenants in this important decision-making space. One YWCA board member describes how the hostel tenants nominated a fellow tenant to the board as part of claiming their right to participation in public life including through decision-making in the YWCA:

So it's a challenge to become a leader. I started by joining the committees for YWCA for the hostel. And when we had the AGM, they put me on the nomination paper. In order to involve you have to fill in the form for the AGM to elect new board members. So I say “OK, I will try”. And some of the tenants they also advised me, “you try to become a board member so that we hostel tenants also have one member staying in the hostel and involved as a board member so that you will raise our issues inside the board and we can tell what we want in the hostel.” So OK, I tried. When we had our AGM I was elected as a board member...So three years as a board member. Yeah, that's how I became involved

in YWCA. And becoming a board member, it's good...especially because board is where making decisions [happens]...

I think they saw my potential; how I talk, confidence, and seeing their needs. 'Cause most of the girls they don't have confidence in speaking. That's why they encouraged me, I think, to go and be a board member. So if they need some repairs or something...and also programs that will help the young women tenants...(interview, November 4, 2012).

Another example of young women knowing and claiming their rights occurred when one young woman staff member successfully applied for a senior staff leadership position. Despite feeling somewhat intimidated and uncertain, she applied for the job because the YWCA taught her that participation in public life includes decision-making in women's organizations. This belief, as well as her personal experience of ongoing and supported leadership development in the YWCA, gave her the courage to apply for and accept a much more senior position than she had been working in. As the successful candidate, despite challenges along the way, she is enjoying the opportunity to participate in decision-making at a whole new level of leadership. In turn, she believes that it is her responsibility to take what she has learned and use it to support herself and other young women to claim their rights. When we spoke, she provided an example of how the YWCA has provided her with the skills and knowledge to help other young women learn about their rights:

I would say that [the YWCA] has enabled me to have the confidence, and also with the experience that I have gained...When the position was advertised, I felt fear but it didn't overtake me and it motivated me just to try for this opportunity. Even though I didn't have the qualifications, just from the experience that I have had [in the YWCA] it really has an impact on me to be able to [try]. Even though I didn't have the qualifications on management and stuff, it's still a YWCA and the experience that I have with the YWCA has enabled me to move forward to try something different. But it's challenging as well, being a staff with a small duty and then taking up a big responsibility of managing and looking after the organization. I think it's quite challenging as well. But I learn along the job as well and I am enjoying it as well...

I feel like what I'm getting out from the YWCA, it has a big impact on me. I feel like if I was somewhere else, I wouldn't be who I am today. YWCA is an organization that really builds the capacity of young women, the confidence, a variety of skills. So I really

believe we are trying to grow leadership, young women's leadership, within the YWCA. And I feel like if YWCA is building me to this stage, then what can I do for my YWCA? As young women we are the most vulnerable to all sorts of social issues so how can we as a YWCA, or as a young woman, also reach out to young women?

A funny thing. Last night I was sitting with my cousin, and she was asking me what is Syphilis. But she is 24. I said, “Syphilis and then Gonorrhea - you don't know?” She said “no, how do you know if you have Syphilis?” So I explained to her, “they are sexually transmitted diseases or infections. But it's mainly that you can have them through having sexual intercourse with someone who has been [infected] and it normally comes about if you have unprotected sex...Go to SIPPA¹⁶ and get information about those things”...And I realized, OK, through the YWCA I get to know about issues like gender, domestic violence, even learn about human rights, but still not fully. So I feel like I get more opportunity than a young woman in the village or a young woman who is a teacher. They are sort of hearing it but they don't really get to understand what it is and how it has an impact on us as young women. So the information-sharing is really important at YWCA, and also the reaching out (interview, October 29, 2012).

YWCA Solomon Islands supports young women to know and claim their rights through programs such as Rise Up!, opportunities to participate in formal leadership and decision-making positions in the organization, and building the confidence of YWCA young women to support young women in the community to know and claim their rights. The fulfillment of young women's right to participation in public life is, in part, achieved through YWCA Solomon Islands' commitment to shared power.

Shared Power, Leadership and Decision-Making: 'Power With'

Another strategy of YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach is shared leadership within the YWCA. Shared leadership crosses boundaries of generations, ethnicity, class, home Province, and board/staff/volunteer status. It is about collective responsibility for achieving the mission and vision of YWCA Solomon Islands, and also about creating opportunities for each woman and young woman involved to develop her personal leadership capacity to contribute to building the organization and the country. Shared leadership in the

¹⁶ SIPPA is the acronym for Solomon Islands Planned Parenthood Association.

YWCA is part of Solomon Islands tradition and culture of sharing what you have with the people around you and reflects the Solomon Islands motto “To lead is to serve” (Pollard, 2006, p. 194).

One YWCA Solomon Islands staff member explains:

Shared leadership? I think it's how we give responsibility to each other or delegate opportunities to each other. Like, trusting one another. Like we are the same, like we can all do it together. So instead of only the one in the senior position doing things, also having confidence and trusting other colleagues to be able to do it, or encouraging them to be confident to take responsibility in coordinating things. So it doesn't feel like they are more or less than the other. So they feel like, yeah, we are just the same in doing things. So when things arise in the present they can tap into that opportunity. There will be no gap left behind (interview, October 29, 2012).

This description of shared leadership both characterizes the leadership style of the staff member, as well as describing the philosophy of leadership at YWCA Solomon Islands more generally. Sharing leadership across different boundaries or categories creates a dynamic organization that embraces non-discrimination and creates space for participation and innovation. The practice of shared leadership is also complex. For example one young woman, through a young woman staff member acting as translator, describes how she raised young women's priorities in her committee and shifted thinking about young women from beneficiaries to leaders in the organization and in the community:

She says that when she joined the committee, she became involved in sharing ideas, especially when [the committee] discusses young women in our community. She also suggests ways she wants to involve young women who have nothing to do in the community, to help them become involved in activities like our group Rise Up! Help them become good leaders in the community. There are so many women out in the rural areas who have nothing to do. They just stay back and are just there to produce babies. When [the committee] has meetings here she tells them these things. Because she is the only young woman [on the committee], she wants those young women out there who have nothing to do to become involved in activities...to do things like handicrafts. That's the other group that will come, the Sistas Savve program...(interview, September 26, 2012).

When I asked why it was important for young women to learn handicrafts and other skills, the response centred around the need for young women to earn their own income. This

was another common theme in my discussions with women and young women: the need for women to earn income that they could manage in order to support their families. One staff member explained that she was working for three reasons: to show her daughters an example of a woman who does not rely on a man for economic security, to support young women's leadership in her community, and to earn income that she can use to pay for her children's education so that her daughters especially will have choices (because her husband spends his income on other priorities) (interview, October 1, 2012). Sistas Savve, a program for young women and women who have children outside of marriage and no incomes, focuses on both sexual and reproductive health and rights as well as livelihood activities appropriate to each community in which the program is offered. The young woman staff member who acted as translator above explains further:

They would come here and make their crafts here so that they can sell them and benefit themselves with money to assist them in the home. Like meeting the basic needs at home. Like for the kids, and to support them. Not a big amount of money but just to support them one way or the other. Because a lot of women have no jobs here and so they just stay back home and they don't earn a living; I mean money to support their families. For example, young women who have babies, we can help them so that they can do things like sewing and other crafts so that they can sell their things so that they can support their families. And also involve them in participation so that they can participate and get to know each other. Get to know each other so that whenever the other one can't, the other one will help (interview, September 26, 2012).

This explanation highlights both the importance of opportunities for income generation, as well as the value of shared leadership through participation. This young woman echoes Kabeer's (1994) assertion that 'power with', and the confidence and awareness that comes through collective learning, creates strong support networks capable of engaging in collective action for change. The Rise Up! program is certainly an example of power with, as discussed in Chapter 5, and the Sistas Savve program also has that potential. The hope for Sistas Savve is that young women who participate in the program not only gain the confidence to assert themselves

as leaders and decision-makers in their own families, but also the confidence to influence change in their communities. Building on this understanding, the Sistas Savve program is implemented with a group of up to twenty women from one community. This group then acts as a social and economic support network long after the program itself has ended. In White River, for example, the group has successfully advocated to their Member of Parliament for funding to collaboratively expand their income-generating activities (field notes, October 26, 2012). This shared ownership of the process of social change is a key part of YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach, and the commitment to collective learning, collective action, and change that brings collective benefits.

Shared power is perhaps the most difficult of the organization's feminist rights-based approach strategies to fully implement. Power dynamics exist at both organizational and individual levels. As highlighted in the section on participation above, power conflicts between individuals can easily undermine the rights-based work of the organization. As well, difficulties which arise with respect to the separation of board and staff roles also impact power dynamics. YWCA Solomon Islands faces multiple challenges to comprehensive power sharing, as explored below.

Challenge: Power Dynamics among Different Groups at YWCA Solomon Islands

YWCA Solomon Islands' practice of power sharing is undermined by tensions in the relationships between some older and younger women, as well as between some board and staff. Because the staff is almost exclusively young women, it can be difficult to discern whether some power conflicts are based on intergenerational tensions or board-staff tensions. While the overall tone is positive, there are one or two very outspoken older board members who some young

women staff feel use their power undermine the YWCA's commitment to shared leadership. One young woman staff explains:

Sometimes, to me, I find older women do a lot of gossiping. That's one main thing about Melanesia and even [the YWCA]. I can honestly tell you. One woman...anything that happens, like in the Management level, she'll always burst it out. Because I experienced it... but I think, "no, that's them. Sit down and mind my own problems". I think...the governance training, it's the best training. It sort of distinguishes between what's governance and what's operational. So, to me, working with older women I just feel, I'm OK working with older women, I'm OK working with women at my age (interview, October 30, 2012).

The responses to my question about who has power in YWCA Solomon Islands varied widely, depending on how each individual understood power as well as her particular standpoint. While some people responded that power rested within formal leadership positions, such as President, others saw power as widely shared among YWCA members. One staff member talked specifically about power between older and younger women. She said that while young women staff do have power it can sometimes be undermined by individual board members overstepping their roles. In the past, this has made her feel that she had to prove her competence:

But I think the more power is with the older women. But the younger women we do have some. Especially young women who work in the office. Because we are the ones who run the office. We are the ones who do the work. So, in a way, we have the respect of the older women in the organization because when good things are said about [the YWCA] by other people or are said in the newspapers they know that we are the ones who do the hard work. So I guess, in a way, we do have their respect. Now more than before they would consult. When I first came into the organization, I had an experience with one of the board members. She is not here now. It was my job to do [certain work] and she went on ahead and said "this is what the YWCA is going to do," without informing me or consulting with me or asking me, "what do you want to do?" So, I wasn't happy with that. And I emailed the lady who was coordinating and I said, "I am not happy with what has happened. If there is going to be anything done, like the YWCA is going to be involved with anything, I feel that I should be the one who you talk to and not her. She is a board member not a staff of the YWCA." So she apologized to me. And since then, more and more, like, today they would never do anything behind my back. Back then I was new and I don't think they trusted me to do my job. So they went on ahead and did it without my knowledge. Anything they want to do now they will talk with me (interview, November 5, 2012).

Another tension at YWCA Solomon Islands is between the administrative and programs staff on one side, and the kindergarten staff on the other. Historically, the kindergarten staff have felt excluded from decision-making. Some kindergarten staff have also felt that the administrative staff do not prioritize the goals of the kindergarten (Feary & Lai, 2012). One staff who works in the kindergarten said bluntly: “we *kindi* teachers feel that office won’t work together with us. They just, yes, they treat us like lower classes” (interview, November 6, 2012). Although things are slowly improving, this statement indicates a belief that the administrative staff wields power that kindergarten staff do not. The General Secretary is working hard to address this tension through instituting joint staff meetings in order to foster dialogue, build stronger relationships among staff, and increase opportunities for shared leadership and decision-making. The same kindergarten staff member who identified the tension said of the joint staff meetings: “[they are] really good. I think it’s very good so that we learn something from them, so that we know what they are telling us about, so that they know what we inform them about” (interview, November 6, 2012). It will take time and concerted effort to diffuse the tensions, but the shift is beginning.

Despite having a hostel tenant on the board, many young women living in the YWCA hostel also feel excluded from power and decision-making at the YWCA. Hostel tenants are often referred to as “girls” rather than as “young women” and significantly are not conceptualized as leaders in the YWCA. While many of the young women living in the hostel hold jobs in government, businesses and NGOs in Honiara, they are not spoken about by most board or staff as young women leaders. Rather, hostel tenants are seen as in need of capacity-building but are often excluded from YWCA programs. One reason for this may be the fact that all hostel tenants are engaged in paid employment or have tertiary school scholarships, while

program participants are typically young women who have not had economic or education opportunities and often those who are isolated in their homes. Hostel tenants identify the gap between the YWCA's discussions about young women's leadership and their own experiences within the YWCA. One such gap is the fact that although hostel tenants are expected to participate on hostel committees, there is neither formal mentorship nor leadership training:

Because for these committees, to be honest, usually they have four maximum, but out of these four the thing is only one or two is active the others are laid back and relaxed. That's the reality. So it's not fair for the others; for the poor one who is very active. It's not good... And in the beginning of the year, during the fellowship, we elect [the committees]. We make nominations and we have the election. The winner gets the majority [of votes]. We nominate girls and we put them in, but if they want to decline they decline. Everybody declines. Because they know [the challenges] they will face. But once we help them I believe there won't be any declination. They'll be looking forward to it. And what are some of the incentives for these committees, afterall? What is this organization? They are leaders. Afterall they are leaders in a small way. To look after this hostel. And this is the main income generation for this organization. But I believe once this organization gives some incentive to build them up, I'm 100% sure nobody will want to stay out. They will want to take up the responsibility. [The YWCA should] maybe take them in for the mentoring program or take them in for leadership programs, leadership advice. Because they are facing challenges. Mind you, they are facing challenges. That's why they don't want to be in there. Every time there's a nomination they decline. And then only somebody, because they're good friends say, "let's go, let's get them into that" (YWCA member, interview, November 4, 2012).

Calling hostel tenants "girls" is used to differentiate between those young women who are not considered equals for the purposes of leadership and decision-making ("girls") and those young women who are ("young women"). Those young women not considered equals are seen as in need of help so that they might engage in appropriate behaviour, learn skills, and become "young women". Interestingly, program participants are almost universally referred to as "young women". There is also a sense at YWCA Solomon Islands that vigilance is needed to prevent hostel tenants from becoming "bad girls", especially under the influence the few hostel tenants who have already been identified as "bad girls". Both safeguarding the reputation of hostel tenants and the YWCA, as well as developing "girls" into "young women", seem to characterize

the way most board and staff refer to and interact with most hostel tenants. One board member explained that the Fellowship Committee was created, in part, to address this concern:

All girls come here because it's the Young Women Christian Association, to learn about God, fellowship together. This is the place where young girls will come and fellowship together. I think before they didn't have a Fellowship Committee. I think this committee was developed recently because they saw that here, in the hostel, girls were involved in drinking, going out a lot. So that's why they put fellowship on Wednesdays. So that girls would come together and fellowship together (interview, November 4, 2012).

Not all board and staff members view the hostel tenants as less than equals. One staff member in particular was extremely angry to learn that hostel tenants were seldom invited to share in leadership and decision-making in the YWCA, especially regarding decisions about life in the hostel. This staff member was particularly concerned with what it means to share leadership in YWCA, and the importance of participation and non-discrimination. She felt that the distinction between “good girls” and “bad girls” was discrimination, as was refusing hostel tenants the power to use their expertise to ensure that decisions made by the organization continuously improved and enhanced the experience of being a hostel tenant (interview, November 5, 2012). If plans to replace the board Hostel Committee with a joint staff-tenant committee go ahead, opportunities for tenants to participate in leadership and decision-making will increase, which may in turn help to shift perceptions of tenants as leaders. However, it will be important for the YWCA to consciously work to ensure that hostel tenants are conceptualized and treated as leaders in the organization.

Several board and staff members are concerned that some of the general membership, in addition to hostel tenants, has been excluded from leadership and decision-making. While participants in the Rise Up! and Sistas Savve programs, and their communities, are invited to participate in program planning and evaluation, and to apply to become board or staff members or peer educators, other members lack both information and opportunities to become involved.

This is due, in part, to the conscious shift through policy and the strategic plan away from a focus on women's interests and toward focus on rights. One of the difficulties is that for some long-term members, the organization is very different than the one they originally joined and it's just not a very good fit anymore. Another challenge is the limited capacity of the YWCA to engage its approximately 100 members in ongoing decision-making.

Several board members expressed that YWCA must be more accountable and responsive to its members, and talked about putting together a membership survey in order to learn more about what members want from the YWCA. While members participate and are represented in the Strategic Planning process, and at each Annual General Meeting, there is a feeling that members should have as many opportunities as possible to participate in decision-making.

Annual membership surveys could be another way for members, including tenants, to provide input into programming decisions. As one board member stated:

I think that is one area that we need to look at. Currently we have around a hundred members. And the one biggest question is whether what we are doing is benefitting them or not. 'Cause some said it's benefitting them, but I haven't heard from the majority. And I think it's very important for the YWCA to bring together all the members, at least hear from them. We must come up with an initiative on how to get ideas from each member on the best programs that YWCA could run to benefit them. Because other women, like we make decisions on the programs but we're not sure if it's benefitting [the members]. And there are also other members out there we haven't heard from them, so it's good to give them space. I mean, create an opportunities to hear from them, to share their ideas about what programs they think are best for them...I would like to do a survey. Because I think most people join the YWCA because they want to attend some of the trainings. There are others who join the YWCA because they want to live in the hostel. There are others who join because their children are attending the *kindi* here. But they also need to say how do they want to be a member of YWCA. What value would YWCA add to you as an individual when you become a member (interview, October 10, 2012)?

Despite the challenges faced by YWCA Solomon Islands to full implementation of power sharing as one strategy of its feminist rights-based approach, it is clear that power is being shared among diverse women and young women board members, staff members, volunteers and

members. At the same time, power sharing between some older and younger women, board and staff, kindergarten and administrative staff, and board/staff and tenants/members could be strengthened and enhanced. Efforts to address this include prioritizing intergenerational leadership, instituting joint staff meetings, the proposed development of a joint staff-tenant hostel committee, and the proposed implementation of an annual member survey. YWCA Solomon Islands has implemented the strategy of power-sharing as demonstrated by young women's participation on the board, staff and committees, as well as shared ownership of the process of social change. Strengthening this strategy will substantively contribute to strengthening the YWCA's feminist rights-based approach.

Community Engagement

Community engagement is one of the priorities of YWCA Solomon Islands. Almost all staff and board members have immediate family members who live in their home villages, and people living in villages in Solomon Islands are considered friends, family and equals. This is in contrast to critiques by Mutua (2009) and others of NGOs that use colonial or missionary-style processes. In some cases, community members come to the YWCA asking for programs and services. The Sistas Savve and Rise Up! programs are in demand around Solomon Islands, with many YWCA members asking if the Sistas Savve program can be offered in their home communities. In Munda the Rise Up! peer educators' group meetings have grown to include young women and some young men in the community who want to participate in any way they can, even though they are not trained as peer educators (YWCA staff member, interview, September 26, 2012).

Another aspect of community engagement is to invite former program participants back to the YWCA to participate in events, meetings, strategic and program planning, and

encouraging them to apply to become staff or board members. A staff member explained that young women continue to return to the YWCA, and that when they arrive they are engaged in the work the YWCA is doing at that time:

[One young woman program participant] is working at the Y as staff. But many of the young women who go through the programs that the Y puts out, they often come back as volunteers. So when they come back as volunteers we tend to involve them in planning and ask them, “do you think this would work?” And that kind of thing. But it's just very informal. [Another young woman] and I were in the first leadership training that the YWCA did in 2010. And then, after that, [this young woman], she had a good job. I can't remember which company she was working for but she quit her job because she wanted to do young women's work. And then after that she was hired by Sistas Savve. She has been around the YWCA ever since 2010 so even though she is not a full-time staff member with the YWCA she was a staff member with Sistas Savve before she went to Fiji. If she's around Honiara she is always at the YWCA. So we tend to, if we have ideas for trainings or something, we would ask whoever is in the office at that time (staff member, interview, November 5, 2012).

Former program participants are welcome at YWCA Solomon Islands as members, whether or not they currently have formal roles as staff or volunteers. For example, former Sistas Savve participants deepen their participation by returning to the YWCA to dialogue about their priorities or share their skills and knowledge with a new group of participants. The fact that so many former program participants are board or staff members speaks to the success of YWCA Solomon Islands' application of the human rights principle of participation.

When asked who benefits from the work of the YWCA, nearly all of the young women and women I interviewed talked about young women and their communities benefitting in multiple ways. These include the *kindi* as a community support to allow women to work outside the home, the hostel as a safe place for young women to live while they work or attend school in Honiara, the community as a whole benefitting from greater involvement of young women in public life, young women program participants learning new skills and knowledge which they are passing on to their families and communities, and staff and board members building their

leadership. The words of one board member and one staff member really captured the spirit of the responses:

The communities benefit. Young women benefit. Families as well. Because those courses go out to young women, and then what they are able to implement affects their families. Parents. Even the board members of YWCA, and staff members of YWCA. Everybody benefits from the work that YWCA is doing. As well, the YWCA is included in one of the policies of the government so the government is also benefitting because it is able to build citizens of the country. So we are just looking into finding out, to say to the government, “you've put us into policy. Now which way can you support YWCA?” So I think the government is benefitting as well (board member, interview, October 10, 2012).

From what I have experienced, young women benefit. Especially with the Rise Up! young women's leadership program. The young women mostly benefitted. The young women, when they are first attending the training, they are very shy and do not open up to share. And some of the young women, it's their first time to learn about such topics so it's also an eye-opener for them. But then it opens the way for them to start becoming involved in community activities. And also, for me personally as an example. I mean, I've really benefitted from the YWCA, from the programs that I attended. It's made me really rise up. So, when I go to meetings I also get a chance to share my opinions. I have the confidence to give my opinion or give comments to the discussions. So it doesn't make me sit back and then think, “I want to say this but I feel shy”. I always speak. So I think young women have benefitted from taking the opportunity to communicate. But then also it has raised their profile in their community... They have started to take up leadership, leading roles in their communities. And also the membership [benefits] as well. Being a YWCA member, even though we don't do much about membership, but it also gives them opportunities. Like, for example, being a board member. It helps their CV so when they applied for a job, they see YWCA under their experiences. It's an easy one.

And also, in terms of the services that we offer, like the hostel, because it benefits most of the young women in the Solomons. I mean, they are housed here. And also the kindergarten. So it's nearly the whole community. The community has benefitted, the different generations, the whole community benefitted from most of our YWCA activities...(staff member, interview, October 29, 2012).

YWCA Solomon Islands engages the community through connections between board, staff, volunteers and YWCA members with their home communities; engaging former program participants in YWCA activities and planning; and expanding programs as will be explored further in the next section. Through this process, whole communities benefit from the work of the YWCA which broadly impacts rights fulfillment in communities.

Growing the Constituency: ALL Young Women Have the Right to Participate in Decision-Making

YWCA Solomon Islands also sees community engagement as expanding the reach of the YWCA to more communities. There are young women across the country who are asking for the Rise Up! and Sistas Savve programs to be delivered in their communities, as well as countless young women who have not heard of the YWCA but who are seen as having the right to know and claim their rights. The YWCA is seen by members, staff, board and the community as the young women's organization of the Solomon Islands, and as such is seen as responsible to young women and their communities across the Solomon Islands to fulfill the vision of "creating space for young Solomon Islands women to influence change" (YWCA Solomon Islands, 2009, p. 5).

One board member states:

YWCA as an organization must work together. The staff, the board, we must communicate so that the programs we do in Solomon Islands help everyone. Especially also we should share with the other provinces. Auki and Munda we have, but it's good to share with other provinces too. Like Choiseul too, programs so that they will learn about YWCA because it's the young women's association. Expand because some of them say, "what is YWCA?" Other places they didn't know information about YWCA. It's a challenge for the board and staff to extend YWCA to other provinces. Also more programs (interview, November 4, 2012).

The belief that all young women should be able to benefit from the work of YWCA Solomon Islands by learning about their rights and claiming their rights, including the right to economic security and the right to participate in public life, is related to the belief that all young women and women are equally leaders. It is also related to the understanding that the constituency of YWCA Solomon Islands is all young women and women in Solomon Islands. Young women are understood to be leaders in their own lives, and leaders or potential leaders in their communities and the nation. Just as Alpizar Dúran, Payne & Russo (2007) emphasize the importance of building collective power to challenge social injustice, the YWCA sees its role as

developing young women's leadership and creating spaces where it can be practiced. One young woman hostel tenant spoke passionately about women's leadership, including the importance of mentoring and self-confidence:

I believe most people they actually take up the role [of leader]. That's an everyday thing that happens at home. We are all leaders. We are all leaders, women and even men. But especially in this country Solomon Islands, men are always regarded as the head. Um, it's true. Even in other countries. In a family, father is always the head. But I think when you are a woman or a girl, and you are in this leadership role, the important thing is the knowledge of your leadership. The knowledge of yourself; your leadership potential. Your leadership talent or style that you already have, and the ones you don't have. And the self-confidence is important in that because it makes who you are. What your leadership will be like (interview, November 4, 2012).

YWCA Solomon Islands uses partnerships as one way to expand the reach of the organization. Its broad-based network includes the World YWCA, other YWCAs in the Pacific region, FWRM, the Solomon Islands Young Women's Parliamentary Group, other women's organizations in Solomon Islands including the National Council of Women and the Women's Rights Action Movement, SIPPA which is a partner in the Sistas Savve program, the Women's Development Division, and many others. These partnerships benefit YWCA Solomon Islands by bringing funding, training and capacity-building, shared knowledge and resources and/or shared program delivery. Another important aspect of YWCA Solomon Islands' network is growing the body of knowledge on young women's and intergenerational leadership. YWCA Solomon Islands primarily chooses partners who support their focus on young women's leadership, and in some cases who are willing to invest in the organization because of their focus on young women's leadership. Through its own work, and in partnership with others, YWCA Solomon Islands is doing the work of "expanding and strengthening a multi-generational network and pool of feminist leaders" (African Feminist Forum, 2006, p. 15). One funder I interviewed specifically noted the focus on young women's leadership as a unique strength of the organization:

We should reach out to the young people more through them. Because we are always saying, “oh, we are helping women.” But in trying to be equal we need to know that the needs of younger women are probably not the same as the rest of everybody. They may have particular needs that we may have overlooked in the name of women. So maybe through YWCA they can address that issue, reaching out to younger women. Because that's their strength. Where [we] may not know (interview, October 19, 2012).

Another way that YWCA Solomon Islands expands its reach is to support groups of women who may not have access to funding to the same degree, or very small groups that rely on community support. In 2011, during the YWCA Week Without Violence, YWCA Solomon Islands held a car wash during which they raised awareness about violence against women. All funds raised were donated by the YWCA to the Christian Care Centre, the only violence against women shelter in Solomon Islands, in recognition of its work supporting women to escape gender-based violence. Another example occurred in 2010 on YWCA Day, when YWCA Solomon Islands used the funds raised from their breakfast to support a small women's peace group in Papua New Guinea:

One more thing. In 2010 we also did a breakfast on World YWCA Day. And then we raised a donation. We appealed to the different Ministries, to the RAMSI people, to the High Commissioners, to see if they wanted to buy breakfast packs. We delivered to them and then they donated. And then we sent the money to the [Kup Women for Peace Group in Simbu Province, Papua New Guinea]. It was during the tribal conflict. So we donated that money to the Kup women, who were also fighting. And then we received a letter from one of the women, who actually joined RAMSI. She was from Kup and she thanked YWCA for their support. When she came she was very happy, and she sent that letter. And during these events we also call for members to come and participate. And also during International Women's Days. And also the 16 Days of Activism. So YWCA has been doing awareness and engaging the public (interview, October 18, 2012).

By expanding program locations to new provinces and communities, growing partnerships and supporting organizations that work with young women and women, YWCA Solomon Islands expands its reach. Driven by its vision, the YWCA strengthens its rights-based approach by continuously working to create more space for more young women to participate in leadership and decision-making.

Respect, Protect, Fulfill: Growing Public Awareness of Women's Rights

Another strategy used by YWCA Solomon Islands to further young women's leadership and women's rights is awareness-raising and public education. While the Women's Development Division is using feminist theology to help communities to understand the value and importance of women's rights and gender equality (interview, October 19, 2012), the YWCA teaches young women to know and claim their rights and to share that knowledge with their families and communities. This sharing takes place during casual conversations, through young women role modelling changed behaviour as they begin to claim their rights, as well as through specific YWCA initiatives. The Rise Up! program, described in Chapter 5, is an excellent example of the YWCA growing the number of young women in Solomon Islands claiming their rights.

Other examples of YWCA Solomon Islands' public education work include hosting community events and meetings such as YWCA-YMCA Week of Prayer worship services, fundraisers and awareness-raising activities during the YWCA Week Without Violence, and the community meetings held by peer educators and Sistas Savve staff to prepare community leaders and community members for YWCA programs which will be discussed further in Chapter 5. YWCA Solomon Islands uses awareness-raising as a strategy to maintain and increase the fulfillment of women's rights. Public education is one way that YWCA Solomon Islands makes duty-bearers aware of their responsibility to respect, protect and fulfill women's rights.

Challenge: How Can We Hold Duty-Bearers to Account in a Culture of Silence?

One challenge to full implementation of YWCA Solomon Islands' advocacy strategy is fact that the community and government are often not receptive to messages about women's rights. The need to do advocacy with government and other duty-bearers is recognized as an important aspect of women's rights work. However, designing effective advocacy strategies can

be difficult. While public awareness events during the Week Without Violence and public fellowship services during the Week of Prayer teach community members about women's rights and young women's leadership, lobbying or advocacy of the government and other duty-bearers has been a relatively small part of the work of YWCA Solomon Islands. One staff member describes the challenges:

We really believe in women, especially in young women. So we are trying our best to advocate to communities about women, especially women's rights. But I think we are not fully, but we are also fighting for equality between men and women. It's still a long run to continue to push for women's rights. But we are working on it...

Not really directly pushing to the government, but indirectly during events which we have. We advocate through the activities on those days, and through our awareness program that we do, and also in our training. In the trainings that we have, the programs also include the topic of human rights which really focuses on women's rights. Also how we operate inside the YWCA, it's sort of matching. So when we go to the communities they are always looking at us as an example...

I mean it's not directly going to the community and saying, "these are women's rights." But showing. And then the people themselves, they could tell. Because if you go directly to the community and say, "this is my right as a woman, I'm going to do this and that", nobody is going listen to you. You will be confronted (interview, October 29, 2012).

Advocacy is an area that YWCA Solomon Islands wants to build up, and it is part of the 2009-2014 Strategic Plan to develop an advocacy plan for the YWCA. Despite the challenges, the YWCA has decided to become a much more vocal advocate for women's rights and take a lead on breaking the silence around discrimination against women in Solomon Islands. One board member feels this is consistent with supporting young women speak out and claim their rights:

Well, I feel that's a role that the YWCA could take. Because, as a young woman, you need to be vocal, and speak out, and speak up and speak about issues that are affecting you (interview, October 10, 2012).

Supporting Young Women to Hold Duty-Bearers to Account for Women's Rights

YWCA Solomon Islands staff and board members and peer educators also take advantage of opportunities to advocate for women's rights with individual members of government and the judiciary. For example, on October 11, 2012 a delegation from YWCA Solomon Islands that included one staff member and one peer educator met with the Ronald Bei Talasasa, Director of Public Prosecutions for Solomon Islands, for the purpose of fact-checking portions of the draft NGO Shadow Report to CEDAW. While there, the delegation advocated for longer and more consistent penalties for rape convictions, as well as the criminalization of "marital rape" in federal law (field notes, October 11, 2012). Another example is the participation of YWCA Solomon Islands in the CEDAW shadow reporting process itself. YWCA Solomon Islands' participation was both an opportunity to build the skills of members of the YWCA delegation, as well as for the YWCA advocate to the United Nations and the Solomon Islands Government for women's rights and gender equality.

Conclusion

YWCA Solomon Islands' leadership model can be understood as framed by a feminist rights-based approach that has power-sharing at its core. The strategies employed to support and deepen shared leadership and decision-making include participation of diverse young women as both a means and an end; space for young women to talk about their experiences and priorities; organizational responsiveness to young women's priorities; formal supports for young women's leadership including policy, a culture of mentorship, and young women teams; capacity-building for young women to learn and call for fulfillment of their rights; continuously enhancing community engagement; and advocating for greater fulfillment of women's rights. While these strategies form a framework in which power is shared, YWCA Solomon Islands continues to

experience challenges to full implementation of its feminist rights-based approach. The YWCA is committed to working to overcome these challenges, and to fully implementating its feminist rights-based approach.

Chapter 5: Engaging with YWCA Solomon Islands' Feminist Rights-Based Approach: Rise Up!, Calling for a New Right to Leadership, and the Y Intergenerational Leadership? Framework

YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach is a collection of strategies and practices that together support rights fulfillment both within the organization and in the wider community, changing the lived realities of women, young women and girls, their families and communities. The Rise Up! young women's leadership program is an excellent example of this model in practice, supporting young women to challenge and change power and gender inequalities through claiming their rights. In this chapter, I also explain how analysis of YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach has prompted me to call for the development of a new right to leadership. Further, I describe how my investigation of YWCA Solomon Islands' leadership model has led me to develop of the Y Intergenerational Leadership? Framework, which documents the critical components of the model. This Framework makes it possible to share YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach with other women's organizations wishing to build capacity in rights-based intergenerational leadership. Both the Rise Up! program and the Y Intergenerational Leadership? Framework demonstrate the transformative potential of YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach.

Practicing Rights, Practicing Equality: Rise Up! Young Women's Leadership Program

The Rise Up! young women's leadership program is an excellent example of YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach in practice. Developed by young women staff and volunteers, Rise Up! builds young women's knowledge of rights and gender inequality, and skills in leading social change. Young women then use these skills and knowledge to challenge power and gender inequalities, claim their rights in the families and communities, advocate for

change through national and international policy processes, and support other young women to know and claim their rights. Rise Up! peer educators are a diverse group of young women of different ethnicities, from different communities and provinces, with varied levels of formal education and work experience. Some peer educators are single, some married, and others are young women with children who are not married. Peer educators share leadership and support one another as leaders, working together to “create space for young women to be leaders of change” (YWCA Solomon Islands, 2011, p. 5).

Rise Up! young women’s leadership program is a peer education program of YWCA Solomon Islands. Based on both the Participatory Learning Techniques process with YWCA members and young women in the communities served by YWCA Solomon Islands, as well as the intensive young women’s leadership workshop led by FWRM in February 2010, YWCA Solomon Islands developed the Rise Up! program. Rise Up! began as a four-day leadership training program for twenty young women in each Honiara, Munda in Western Province, and Auki in Malaita. The training had such a profound impact on young women’s knowledge of their rights and confidence to claim their rights that young women wanted a way to take the training to communities across their provinces (YWCA staff member, personal communication, September 24, 2012).

The Rise Up! Peer Education Program was developed to support the goal of more young women knowing and claiming their rights. Initial Rise Up! participants felt strongly that the training had value for young Solomon Islands women and chose a training of trainers model as a way that young women themselves could take even greater ownership of, and expand, the program. In 2011, twenty of the original sixty young women were selected through a competitive application process to participate in the first peer education training. Together, the peer educators

learned facilitation skills, built their confidence to deliver workshops, and enhanced their knowledge of the topics human rights, women's rights, gender, leadership, public speaking and social change. When peer educators felt that they needed opportunities to practice giving workshops, YWCA staff supported peer educators through coaching and attending the initial round of community workshops to provide support and feedback. Since then, peer educators have delivered Rise Up! workshops for secondary schools, Church youth groups, the YWCA's Sistas Savve program, and communities to build young women's capacity to claim their rights (field notes, September 26, 2012).

Realizing that the twenty peer educators would not be able reach all of the young women across their provinces, let alone in other parts of Solomon Islands, a small group of peer educators in Honiara took the opportunity through the Pacific Young Women's Leadership Strategy to build their skills to deliver peer education training. Supported by YWCA staff and funding from the World YWCA, the four peer educators trained two new groups of peer educators in rural Guadalcanal province in 2012 and 2013 (YWCA Solomon Islands, unpublished). The Rise Up! Peer Education Program manual describes the goal of the Rise Up! program:

Young Solomon Islands women are taking the lead, generating change by raising awareness of issues that affect them in their own communities. We hope that with support, workshop-running skills and growing confidence, the young women will be able to think critically and communicate effectively about issues they are concerned about. YWCA Solomon Islands has high hopes for its new peer educators – we believe they are already positive role models for other young women in Solomon Islands. We hope their passion and commitment will help to strengthen and extend Rise Up! into a vibrant community of young women leaders (YWCA Solomon Islands, 2011, p. 2).

The Rise Up! program affords opportunities for the implementation of multiple strategies of YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach including participation as both a means and an end, space for young women to articulate their priorities and organizational

responsiveness, young women teams as an institutional support for young women's leadership, young women knowing and claiming their rights, community engagement, growing the constituency, and rights advocacy. This next sections will explore how Rise Up! operationalizes and enhances YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach.

Participation of Young Women with Diverse Intersectional Identities at the Grassroots as Both a Means and an End

As discussed in Chapter 4, YWCA Solomon Islands provides multiple opportunities for Rise Up! young women to participate in leadership and decision-making in the YWCA. All Rise Up! participants become YWCA members, opening the possibility to participate in YWCA programs and events, apply for staff and board positions, as well as engage in decision-making through Annual General Meetings and strategic planning processes. Rise Up! peer educators have further opportunities to participate in planning and decision-making because they are welcome to drop in any time and are treated as volunteer staff while they are there. Three Rise Up! peer educators attended international YWCA meetings connected with the Pacific Young Women's Leadership Strategy, and four implemented the project of expanding the peer education program to rural Guadalcanal. In addition, one peer educator became a YWCA Program Assistant, one became a board committee member, and one became part of the staff of the Sistas Savve program. One peer educator explains:

I am doing this through the YWCA Solomon Islands. The staff are so kind. They have concern for us, the Rise Up! participants. And always they encourage us, and make us participate during the events they do. We have come to the YWCA, and they make us participate. It's like a home to us (group interview, November 6, 2012).

Development, implementation and evaluation of the Rise Up! program is in itself an important way that young women participate in leadership and decision-making in the YWCA.

One Rise Up! peer educator talks about the impact that participation has had on her personally, and the ways in which it has changed her life:

For myself, I really changed a lot. Because at first I am the kind of woman who just stays at home and does housework and doesn't really go out or be friends with other women. No, I was just staying at home and doing housework. But since I attended this Rise Up! training, I know that I have the potential to lead. I have the self-esteem. So when it comes to seeing myself, I have emotions that really affect me. I see that I have the potential but I never realized it. So since I attended Rise Up! I just stand on my feet and say, "oh, I can do it now". Nobody can stop me. But now my husband is really happy with me. He says, "oh, you changed a lot. Keep it up. You are doing great work". So YWCA is my first foundation in life. So whenever there is training, I tell my experience and I am emotional. The women or the girls came to me and say, "thank you. We too face the same thing. So now we can do it as you do." (group interview, November 6, 2012).

This peer educator describes her life before Rise Up! as a typical experience for young women in Solomon Islands: isolated at home and focused on work inside the home. Becoming a Rise Up! peer educator has transformed her life because she now has the self-confidence to see herself as a leader. Although being a peer educator can, at times, be extremely challenging, "because I have not really gone through formal education. I just finished Form 5, and no further education. So when it comes to coordinating this project...some of the things I don't really understand: writing reports and making budgets...It's very challenging for me" (group interview, November 6, 2012). Despite, or perhaps because of, the challenges being a peer educator presents, this young woman knows that she has the strength and ability to pursue further leadership roles. In addition to a new dream of attending further education with a scholarship from the Solomon Islands Government, she has taken on leadership roles in her Church:

Okay, for me, before I was aimless. Before I was aimless; no aims or goals or dreams. No. But since I attended Rise Up! now I am happy that they appointed me to be a Youth President for the Catholic Church in my community and Secretary for the women. So I was very happy that they see the changes in me. They said, "oh, you are a good leader you must do this and this for us." So slowly I do the work. Last year and continue this year. So that's Rise Up! (group interview, November 6, 2012).

Another peer educator has been having challenges within her family. As the only young woman in a household of boys, she has held sole responsibility for work inside the home. Even her Aunt, the other woman in the house, has delegated the housework. Before Rise Up! this young woman saw the situation as normal. Now, she is standing up for her right to decide how she spends her time and her right to participate in public life, changing her own material reality:

For me a lot has changed, especially within my family. Like, I live with my Auntie here and I am the only girl at home. So I used to do all the work in the house, doing babysitting and cooking and washing. Since I attended Rise Up! I started to realize. Because I am the only one that stayed at home too, apart from going to school, I stayed at home and did all my Auntie's work and she only came back at night. So I just ground all the work in me and did this and that and was exhausted at the end of the day. But after I attended [Rise Up!] it just changes how I think. I started to give work to other people in the house, because we have boys at home. So I am, like, "you do this and you do this and you will do this". And I even tell them to do babysitting sometimes. 'Cause I just stop – "oh, I'm not the only one who gets a big selfhood in this house. Other people got to work too." And even my Auntie, I started to change how we live in the house. Like, if I want to go out somewhere I just tell her that I need to go and she should be back and be with the kids. So now I just I feel happy and I feel like I am enjoying some of the things outside the box. Now I have a spare key...

[Rise Up!] really gives us courage to uphold our rights. Like, us girls can speak for ourselves in the Solomons. Like in the Pacific girls just stay low and do as people tell you to. So at home, even my neighbours when I go out of the house and do something outside, they are just, "oh it's almost getting to be dinner and you are getting out?" Because we have to cook. And I just tell them, "oh well, there are people at home in the house and we share tasks. I do my part. I do the dishes. They do the cooking. It's Okay. Nothing's wrong." So I just feel like I have the confidence to uphold my rights as a young woman (group interview, November 6, 2012).

A third peer educator has not only come to believe that she is a leader in her community, but has taken up leadership in the disability rights movement in Solomon Islands. She is active in lobbying government to sign the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and through the development of policy through People with Disabilities Solomon Islands is critically engaging "discourses of religion, culture, tradition and domesticity" (African Feminist Forum, 2006, p. 11). This peer educator's life has transformed from a life of isolation and exclusion as a

disability girl to active participation in her community and being seen by others as a leader. This is particularly significant because in Solomon Islands it is a social norm to exclude and discriminate against women with disabilities, including keeping them hidden and secret as “bad omens” or “filthy” (Joint NGOs Group, 2012, p. 11). Despite experiencing such discrimination in childhood, this peer educator now sees herself as a leader in multiple capacities, and knows that as a young woman with disabilities she has the right to participate in the political and public life of her community at all levels, including Parliament:

Ok, I have a message to Solomon girls. We stay at home doing work at home. Boys go out and do work at their offices and they do outside work and they have the right to stand up in the Parliament house, government. And I never knew that I have the right to sit inside the Parliament, Government House. Now I know I have the right to sit in the Parliament house. I like that. And now I know I have a long-term leadership role. I am a leader of young women with disabilities. And I am a leader of Rise Up! And I am a youth leader of my community. I am all of those things all together. I never sleep at night. No time. And when I go home, “oh, one of your youth duties.” And I come down and see them. Every day. And I always sleep at one o'clock and two o'clock and midnight. That's my role in leadership...

One thing I forgot is, my family, they think I am disability girl. And they said to me, you stay at the house, do the work at the house, because you are disability girl. So when I escaped, when I attended the Rise Up! workshop, I realized disability girls can do anything. Disability girls have a right to work at the office because in the last two weeks we made a policy to government to recognize us. But we find government never recognizes disability people, our right to work in the office, no. But now government recognizes the disability persons like me to work at any office and make a contribution. So in last week I have been working on this policy to raise our voices to government to recognize us. Since Rise Up! I have been doing a lot of talking to government. So I am happy with YWCA (group interview, November 6, 2012).

Rise Up! young women's leadership program facilitates participation as both a means and an end for young women with diverse intersectional identities, including young women of diverse ethnicities and communities who have not completed secondary school, young women who were married before the age of eighteen, young women who have migrated to Honiara to live with family and attend secondary school, and young women with disabilities. Building

human rights skills and knowledge as part of Rise Up!, and being connected to the Rise Up! network, supports young women to claim their rights, change the material realities of their lives and challenge power and gender inequalities in their communities.

Space for Young Women to Articulate their Priorities and Organizational Responsiveness

The Rise Up! program provides young women only spaces in which young women can tell their stories, build common understanding of their rights and the impacts of rights violations on their lives and communities, and dialogue toward action and change. In learning about their rights young women have opportunities to explore which issues and concerns are priorities based on their lived realities, speaking from their standpoints as people marginalized within their communities. Young women also build confidence through Rise Up!, with public speaking highlighted as a critical skill in a predominantly oral culture in which public meetings are key decision-making spaces at the community level. One young woman explained: “For me, I cannot stand in front and I am very shy, and when I stand in front of people I go like this – [looks scared]. But since I took the Rise Up! program I can talk. Because I have a voice” (group interview, November 6, 2012).

Young women build their confidence presenting to their peers rather than “somebody big and older” (peer educator, group interview, November 6, 2012). The group of peer educators I interviewed also noted the significance of building confidence by facilitating workshops with Solomon Islanders, saying “and they don’t take us to facilitate with white people” (peer educator, group interview, November 6, 2012). When I asked why it was important not to facilitate with white people, one of the peer educators responded, “having the mentality that you are better than us? Is that it? Although in some cases it’s not like that. But we always; our race always thinks like that” (group interview, November 6, 2012). This exchange highlights how internalized

racism that has resulted from colonialism and neo-colonialism in Solomon Islands complexifies intergenerational experiences (see Williams & Konsmo, 2011), and speaks to the value of Rise Up! as a safe space where young women can raise their voices.

The success of Rise Up! can, in part, be attributed to the principle of respect which forms its foundation. Young women are treated as important, equal people whose ideas have value. For some, this is the first time they believed themselves equal to other people in their families and communities including chiefs and church leaders. As one young woman explains: “one thing I really like about this workshop is every idea is important equally; every person’s ideas. And they were acknowledged by everyone. Whatever you say, everyone is excited about it.” Another young woman adds: “you just feel good; important” (group interview, November 6, 2012).

For the peer educators I interviewed, the primary goal of Rise Up! is to create space in which young women can formulate and articulate their priorities and concerns. The rights young women highlight as important in their realities are to food, shelter, information about things that impact their lives, to decision-making in the home and in public, freedom of speech and opinion, to share ideas and opinions with community leaders, education, economic benefits, sexual and reproductive health rights, to run for Parliament, to come and go from their homes when they want, freedom from violence, rights for persons with disabilities, as well as their responsibility not to violate the rights of others. Through Rise Up! young women learn about their rights, build confidence and public speaking skills, and then claim their rights with community leaders, logging companies, and other duty-bearers. Young women using their voices to claim their rights is the ultimate indicator of the success of the Rise Up! program.

Through Rise Up!, young women have opportunities to articulate their priorities for the YWCA, in addition to their priorities for community-level change. Rise Up! participants have

been involved in leadership and decision-making at every stage of the program's development and implementation. One significant decision made by the peer educators in this process was to write the curriculum in Solomon Islands Pijin, the common language among the over 80 local languages, and then to translate the Pijin to English. When peer educators facilitate they first present a topic in English, such as the simplified Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and then explain it in Pijin to ensure that participants clearly understand the concepts they are being encouraged to explore. For example, peer educators would say:

“We've talked a little bit about 'discrimination against women' but what do these words mean? What does discrimination look like? Discrimination means treating women differently from men just because they are women. But men and women are different and this means that sometimes we should treat men and women differently. So how can we know if when we treat men and women differently this is bad and discrimination, or if it is okay?”

“Iumi stori lelbet finis abaotem ‘discrimination against women’ but wat na trifala words ia minim? Wat na discrimination hem luk laek? Discrimination hem minim taem pipol tritim woman o gele difrent from wei oketa tritim man, jas bikos hem woman o gele. But hem tru dat oketa man and woman difrent an hem minim dat samtaems bae iumi sud tritim oketa lo difrent wei. So hao na bae iumi save if taem iumi tritim oketa man an woman difrent ia hem no gud and hem discrimination, or if hem olraet nomoa?” (YWCA Solomon Islands, 2011, p. 20).

Peer educators then lead participants in activities that link the concepts with everyday life so that participants have opportunities to identify their questions, priorities and concerns and explore when and where they might articulate and act on them. One common theme in the workshops I observed was the right of both young women and young men to make their own decisions despite pressure from parents and community leaders or chiefs to behave, or even vote, a certain way. A young woman in one of the workshops told the group: “I had heard of human rights before this workshop, but I didn’t understand how they applied to me. When I go back to my village I will tell people about human rights and stand up for my rights” (Joint NGOs Group, 2012, p. 22). As Ledwith and Springett (2010) assert, through dialogue young women see their

lived realities as situated within the power dynamics of wider social structures and see themselves as agents of change.

Through the creation of young women's spaces and the performance of respect, YWCA Solomon Islands ensures that it is responsive to young women's priorities. The Rise Up! program is one example of how young women's priorities are informing the work of the YWCA. Responsiveness to young women's priorities is a key aspect of YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach.

Institutional Supports Build Capacity for Young Women's Leadership: Young Women Teams

Young women teams at YWCA Solomon Islands create safe spaces for young women's leadership, and empower young women to challenge inequalities in their lives and communities. Young women teams not only support one another to build and lead programs at YWCA Solomon Islands, but also impact one another's personal leadership development. In the Rise Up! peer education program, teams of peer educators in each of Honiara, Munda in Western Province, and Auki in Malaita, work together to transform their communities but also to build confidence, skills and knowledge in one another. For the four peer educators who are expanding Rise Up! peer education training to rural Guadalcanal, the experience of taking the Rise Up! training together, becoming peer educators together, attending a Pacific Young Women's Leadership Training in Fiji, and now implementing peer educator training in additional communities has built a close and committed team of young women. When I interviewed these four young women as a group, the first thing they talked about was the importance of "respect" in Rise Up! As the interview progressed, it became apparent that "respect" creates safe spaces to share personal stories, inspire and serve as role models for one another, and plan action for change:

... Solomon boys they say to us, “do this, do this.” But after I came back I remembered one of my host fathers, he was doing the cooking. So when I came back I saw the Solomon Islands boys. Before I went they said to me, “do this, cook.” And when I came back I said to them, “today, you are the cook. You can have your dinner tonight, you can cook.” This week two of my brothers cooked our dinner, not my mom. I made a list for them. And this list was for the boys. I am one girl and they are 10 boys in my home. I said to them, “you do this one week.” When I get home, there is food on the table (peer educator, group interview, November 6, 2012).

I got an idea from [her]. Because the other day, I told one of my cousin brothers to cook the soup with the cabbage. And he just said, “oh my goodness, I don't know what to do.” And I said, “ok, I put the water in the pot.” I said, “don't put any more water in there otherwise the cabbage will froth up.” And I said, “you just put the salt and the flavours and then you put Taiyo.” I went back in the evening and found that the cabbage has turned brown. It has been overcooked. But I just ate the food because I know he has never been cooking. So I got this idea from [her]. Maybe if I put him for one week, maybe he will improve some of his cooking skills. Because that's for one day I just told you about; one evening (another peer educator, group interview, November 6, 2012).

Young women teams are a significant aspect of how the Rise Up! program supports young women to confidently claim their rights. The next section will further explore how claiming their rights is changing the material reality of young women's lives.

Young Women Knowing and Claiming Their Rights: 'Power Within'

As part of its feminist rights-based approach, YWCA Solomon Islands not only emphasizes participation and non-discrimination, but the importance of women and young women knowing and actively claiming their rights. When I observed the community-based Rise Up! training in Western Province, many young people talked about the fact that they did not know about human rights before attending the training. Others said that they had heard of human rights, but did not know that those rights applied to them or to their families. After exploring “the right to take part in decision-making in our family, community or country” (YWCA Solomon Islands, 2011, p. 12), some young people expressed a desire to claim their rights by refusing to silently accept the decisions of the chief and instead asserting their own ideas, asking questions,

and challenging a chief who tells the community how to vote. The statement of one young man who participated in the training underscores the value of human rights training:

As a chief's son, I realised how we used to neglect the rights of my sisters when it comes to inheriting our tribe's properties, especially land. Practicing patrilineal system, we men have the power over land and forests that belong to our tribe and often we did not recognise the rights of our sisters. When the topic on 'Women's Rights and Human Rights' was shared, I realised that through our cultural beliefs the rights of women in our community are often discriminated. This is a big challenge for me especially when we were brought up with such traditional beliefs. Yet, I believe that there is still room for change once such important knowledge is shared to all individuals in our community. After realising the importance of these topics, it is my hope that all members in my community attend this training (Moses Galo in World YWCA, 2013a, p. 1).

Through the Rise Up! program, young women learn about human rights and women's rights and then become peer educators with the skills to teach other youth about rights. In the workshops, rights are not abstract concepts but explored in the context of important issues in people's lives such as land rights, gender inequality in family and community decision-making, and the freedom to vote for whom one chooses. One young woman peer educator told me, "before, I never realized that I have the rights" (group interview, November 6, 2012). Wondering how peer educators overcame perceptions of rights as a "Western" idea (YWCA staff member, interview, October 30, 2012), I asked one young woman, "what information about women's rights will you share?" She responded:

I say about women's rights: as a young women we have a right to share [leadership] and make decisions in the family. It's in the human rights articles, plenty of them. So women have the right to express their thoughts or opinions, to be involved in the community meetings. Like here in [my community], the culture is we look on men as the boss. They are big and women, women are under them. But when we had a training here, the follow-up training, I told them that women also have the right to share. Since we are born as women, we are free to do whatever we want to do. Not only the men. I just told them, like that. So they have fair understanding on that now. Maybe when they get back to their communities or homes they can share that. Like, we have rights to be involved in whatever things we want to do. We have freedom of expression, to express our thoughts, and women's rights on decision-making. You see, in our community, so many times women are neglected. They just stay back home. They believe that their work is to stay back home and produce babies and, yeah, their role is to work, like, washes the dishes

and make gardens. And so they have no influence in the community. So mostly, men they are the ones who take all the opportunities. And so the women have lack. But now they understand that women also have rights. So not until the Rise Up! started. Like, for example, in meetings. For example in logging meetings, only men are allowed to go there. Women, they do not allow them because they believe that women have no power. Like you have nothing to know about those things. Like you have no rights. So they are neglected and have no way to voice out their opinions. So when we have our training here I tell them that not only men have the power, women also have the right to share what we think is good. So that they can be involved in making decisions and influence the change in our community. Like women are the ones who have concern for the kids and so on so maybe they are the ones with the right decisions to make (interview, September 26, 2012).

This young woman brings up another reason why YWCA Solomon Islands is working so hard to support young women to participate in leadership and decision-making: the belief that women will make better decisions than men about laws to protect people and about the use of community resources for the benefit of the whole community rather than a small few. When she says, “women are the ones who have concern for the kids...so maybe they are the ones with the right decision to make,” she is referring to the belief that women make decisions for the good of their families and communities rather than for personal gain. While this belief is supported by much of the critical mass theory (see *Young Women Teams* in Chapter 4), Batliwala & Dhanraj (2007) warn that it is erroneous to assume that women with political power will necessarily work for social justice, gender equality, environmental justice and peace. The Rise Up! human rights training addresses these concerns by fostering respect, knowledge of both rights and responsibilities, and commitment to rights that includes gender equality and social justice.

The history of YWCA Solomon Islands demonstrates that social power based on class and position complexifies gendered power, with its transformation post-conflict from an organization run by elite women to an organization where power is shared by young women and women at the grassroots. Although we cannot assume that young women will make decisions based on social justice and gender equality, there is evidence that when young women have the

opportunity to speak in public meetings in local Solomon Islands communities they are calling for accountability to community members and sustainable development. One of the peer educators describes how the Rise Up! program is building young women's confidence to participate in decision-making in community land use meetings:

...There is change in my community. A lot of young women started to realize their role; that they have rights. In youth groups, they realize their rights. In our community, young women are usually isolated except for Church, Bible reading, and then at home. When they started to know their rights, they got motivated to be involved. They got courage to stand in front and speak out; participate in community meetings. Young women are often not invited but when they know their rights they attend and speak; share ideas in meetings. Save the Children used to come and talk on rights of the children. Young women started to answer the workshop questions and contribute to the discussions. Or meetings on logging in the community. Young women feel confident to discuss the impacts of logging companies in the community. They ask about impacts on future generations. When other young women see these changes, they start to ask questions. "What are these young women doing?" They come and ask questions at YWCA. When they see other young women standing in front, they ask to also join in these community meetings. Like with logging (interview, September 26, 2012).

In the part of Solomon Islands where this young woman peer educator is located, land is inherited through a matrilineal system and matrilineal inheritance is protected through customary law (field notes, October 10, 2012). Yet men make the decisions about land use at public meetings where women and young women are neither invited nor welcome to participate. One legacy of colonialism, which recognized men as land owners and decision-makers, is this distortion of the matrilineal system (Bennett, 2000). Young women are thus excluded from decision-making about *kastom* land and men often make decisions to maximize immediate profit, both on palm oil and copra plantations and in areas where logging is predominant.

Young women are particularly discriminated against in community decision-making processes about land use. In most communities, women and especially young women are not permitted to speak during community meetings about land use. Despite the fact that many young women are concerned about the impacts that unrestricted logging is having on traditional land, and that they have land ownership rights, young women are prevented from participating in decision-making about the use of that land (Joint NGOs Group, 2012, pp. 34-35).

These circumstances highlight the significance of young women who have participated in the YWCA's Rise Up! training standing up in community meetings and demanding accountability to future generations for land use decisions. Through Rise Up! young women develop their 'power within', first deconstructing dominant narratives that have led them to believe that women should stay at home and be obedient then co-constructing alternate narratives of young women as leaders and decision-makers. Young women's 'power within' is fostered as their confidence is built by doing, demonstrating to themselves and others that they are, in fact, leaders. The momentum is building for young women's leadership, not only in the YWCA but in communities in Solomon Islands. One young woman peer educator explained: "Since this change started to develop, young women take the lead. There is big change coming" (interview, October 1, 2012). Supporting young women to know and claim their rights through Rise Up! includes building confidence, teaching about rights, creating opportunities to practice claiming rights, and encouraging young women to claim their rights in their families, communities and beyond.

Community Engagement

Changing the materiality of rights in young women's lives is linked to engaging communities in the work of YWCA Solomon Islands. When peer educators and staff explore the possibility of delivering workshops in a particular community, a group of peer educators visits that community to do a scoping and sensitization session, "meeting with the gatekeepers" and community members including young women and young men who are interested in learning more about Rise Up! (peer educator, group interview, November 6, 2012). This is a multi-step process through which peer educators take the time needed to build relationships with the

community in order to help create spaces in which young women can influence change. In one community more than 65 community members participated in the scoping study, including four men and two women community leaders. In another community, more than 100 community members participated, including six men and three women community leaders (YWCA Solomon Islands, unpublished). The peer educators described the process:

In October we did our first scoping study in [the community] to identify young women and seek permission from the gatekeepers if they allow us to run the training in their community for the young women and girls in [the community].

Identifying a venue for the training. Facilities there.

They accepted.

Yeah they accepted. They really like the training...

We send a written letter first, to the chief or the church leaders. And they announce it at the church service. After prayer they announce it. So they are already aware of it. So when we are there they just say, "here they come." And we just make our brief presentation of why YWCA and what this training is all about; the Rise Up! and the work of the YWCA.

We just work together with their leaders and they get everyone organized and we do the presentation (group interview, November 6, 2012).

The community engagement process undertaken as part of Rise Up! creates opportunities for community leaders and members to learn about Rise Up! and become supportive of young women's participation. It also legitimizes what young women learn in Rise Up! through legitimization of the program as a whole. Young women are supported to claim their rights in their families and communities by the knowledge and skills they gain through Rise Up!, the support network of Rise Up! young women, and the spaces Rise Up! community engagement processes open in communities in which young women can influence change.

Rise Up! not only facilitates community engagement, but also active public education about rights. One example is the dramatic presentations on violence against women by Rise Up! participants at the market in Munda. The dramas are accompanied by opportunities for community members to comment, ask questions and engage in dialogue. The local police are also invited to participate by sharing information about laws prohibiting violence against women and legal penalties for engaging in violent behaviour. One staff member describes the performances:

On domestic violence, we used to present skits. Last year we had groups of girls, that's the Rise Up! groups, we used to do our skits and we just presented them down there at the market. For our skit we used to distribute posters and just pasted them around the trees, and around there. And so people read them and knew about [the presentations]. We composed songs about domestic violence. We worked with boys, and so we young women, and also boys, we helped making those dramas.

We perform that song [at the market]. We presented a skit and so people enjoyed watching us. Like men hitting women. And some of them are guilty about that.

Some of them just came and, "is that the violence?" Because we stated that the violence is not only hitting women. It also involves, like, you make fun of your women, you swear at her. Not only physical, but it also involves emotional, psychological. If you hit your women, or you just shout to her, or you tell her bad words like, "you stupid", that's also violence. So they just get a clear picture of what this violence is. But they believe that violence is only a physical thing. Like, you just hit a woman or something *olsem*. But really it's not only that, but involves emotional. As long as you hit a woman, that's the violence. So they get a clear picture on what is violence. We also involved the police down there. They also helped us on what the law will do if they punch a woman or hit a woman (interview, September 26, 2012).

These dramatic presentations have profoundly impacted some community members. One woman in particular, when she learned that there were legal penalties for violence against women, told her husband he had to stop or she would report him to the police. When he didn't stop, she reported him. He was arrested, and eventually sentenced to eighteen months in jail. Other women in the community have used this concrete example of the penalty for domestic

violence to advocate that their husbands stop being violent toward them. For example, one woman threatened that the next time her husband was violent toward her she would report him and he would go to jail just like the man who had already been convicted. She reports that although her husband was violent toward her for most of their marriage, he has never been violent toward her since that moment (interview, September 29, 2012). One YWCA member recounts the impact of the presentations by Rise Up! participants:

One of *lo* women there reported her husband, and her husband went to prison. Like, the *oketa* women *lo* there *savve* what to do. *Lo whatna doim* for, when *lo* husband abuse *hem*, *lo* attitude, how to stop him. And they *savve* too that *lo* violence, it's not just punching. It's not just using your fist but saing abusive words, that's violence too (YWCA member, interview, October 1, 2012).

Through raising public awareness about women's rights violations, partnering with and educating the police, and teaching community and individual responsibility to respect, protect and fulfill rights, Rise Up! is increasing the fulfillment of women's rights in communities. The impact of dramatic presentations by young women at the market in Munda has reverberated throughout the community, and given some women the confidence to claim their right to freedom from violence. In Solomon Islands, where domestic violence impacts one out of every three women, the leadership of Rise Up! peer educators is making significant change.

YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach, as demonstrated through an exploration of the Rise Up! young women's leadership program, creates space for shared power, leadership and decision-making inside the organization as well as space in which young women can influence the material reality of rights in their families and communities. The YWCA Solomon Islands experience has much to offer other women's organizations struggling with power and generational inequalities. One possibility raised by YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach is the future development of a new right to leadership.

The many successes of YWCA Solomon Islands, which I have argued resonate with a feminist rights-based approach, contrasted with the disempowering experiences of many young women in other women's organizations (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000; Wilson, 2005), raise questions about how to create the conditions for women's intergenerational leadership and rights fulfillment. The experience of YWCA Solomon Islands suggests that applying the human rights principles of equality, non-discrimination, accountability and participation inside women's organizations is critical to this work. Beyond human rights principles, YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach also highlights the interdependence and indivisibility of the right to participation in political and public life and other social, economic, cultural, civil and political rights. In this section I argue that implementation of the right to participation in political and public life as a strategy for achieving intergenerational leadership and broader rights fulfillment would be considerably strengthened by the development of a new right to leadership.

The right to participation in political and public life is guaranteed by CEDAW Article 7, which includes the right of all women "to participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country". While it is states parties that are legally obligated to respect, protect and fulfill women's right to participation in political and public life under CEDAW, Gready explains that rights-based approaches "alter the nature of the ownership of human rights among NGOs" and reconstruct NGOs as political and social, rather than legal, duty-bearers (2008, p. 741). Further, the Vienna Declaration calls for States to cooperate with NGOs in respecting, protecting and fulfilling human rights (World Conference on Human Rights, 1993, para 13). In the absence of formal legal human rights obligations for NGOs, rights-based approaches can be understood to present NGOs with moral, political and

social human rights obligations. Despite this fact, young women continue to be marginalized in women's organizations.

The right to participation in political and public life is limited by the manipulability of the concept of participation. Participation as a concept exists on a continuum from tokenism to broad-based shared power and decision-making. It is all too easy for those in power to define participation in terms most beneficial to themselves. For example, young women who are excluded from leadership and decision-making in women's organizations might nonetheless be considered to be participating in public life when they are consulted about so-called youth issues and asked to make coffee. Another example is the World Bank's assertion that providing information is a form of participation (Cornwall, 2008, p. 270). Further, consultation in order to legitimate finalized decisions is often called participation and used to obfuscate the concentration of decision-making power in the hands of a few (Cornwall, 2008). The difference between the participation described above and participation as both a means and an end in YWCA Solomon Islands is the difference between formal and substantive rights. The above examples suggest that further action is needed to ensure the substantive right full and equal participation in political and public life.

Despite the fact that the Preamble of CEDAW obligates the "maximum participation" of women in decision-making "on equal terms with men in all fields" (CEDAW Committee, 1997, para 2), the concept of participation is often downgraded into participation in pre-determined projects and/or participation as "inclusionary control" (Kabeer, 1994; Kothari, 2001, p. 143; Hickey & Mitlin, 2009). In fact, the meaning of participation in development is widely contested (Kabeer, 1994; Cleaver, 2001; Kothari, 2001; Mohan, 2001). While the CEDAW Committee's

General Recommendation No. 23 clarifies the definition of the right to participation in political and public life, gender inequality in policymaking persists (World Bank, 2012).

Thus, even when the moral human rights obligations of NGOs are acknowledged, the right to participation in political and public life is open to broad interpretation. A partial solution would be to widely disseminate the CEDAW Committee's *General Recommendation No. 23* among human rights activists, NGO workers, and others mandated to monitor implementation of human rights obligations. Holding States Parties to their legal obligation to fulfill women's substantive right to participation in political and public life, and NGOs to their moral obligation, would most certainly impact intergenerational leadership in women's organizations and women's and young women's enjoyment of rights. This radicalization of the right to participation has some potential to address discrimination against women and young women. However, the concept of participation could remain susceptible to misuse.

My investigation of YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach has led me to understand the importance of shared power, leadership and decision-making as an integral aspect of implementing participation as both a means and an end. Whether we are talking about the right to participation in political and public life or the human rights principle of participation, it is the concept of participation that can be manipulated by those with the power to define it in any given situation. It is critical to ensure that participation is recognized as "not only the right to participate effectively in a given space, but the right to define and shape that space" (Gaventa, 2004, p. 34). This requires identifying and addressing power inequalities (Gaventa, 2004; Kelly, 2004; Darrow & Tomas, 2005). Therefore, I contend that the right to participation in political and public life would be considerably strengthened by the development and broad-based recognition of a new right to leadership.

A thorough discussion of a proposed new right to leadership would require an entire thesis in itself. Here I am calling for further research into the possibility of developing a new right to leadership, that might be defined as the right to participate in shared power and decision-making, through both formal and informal leadership opportunities and positions in the private, political and public life of the country. I posit that an understanding of the right to participate in political and public life as interdependent on and indivisible from a new right to leadership would ensure that participation was understood to extend to determining the ‘decisionable agenda’ (Kabeer, 1994, p. 231). Clifford Bob (2008) emphasizes that the development of new rights necessitates both groups experiencing injustices identifying normative claims and key human rights NGOs advancing those claims. Therefore, I recommend that diverse young women, human rights activists, NGO workers, and others concerned with ensuring the full and equal participation of diverse women and young women in political and public life, including women’s organizations, advocate for the addition of a new right to leadership within the human rights corpus.

The future possibility of a new right to leadership, as raised by my analysis of the experiences of YWCA Solomon Islands, is also supported by Mutua’s (2002) call for a multicultural human rights corpus. The development of new human rights grounded in the realities and practice of Global South NGOs and peoples has the potential to lead to the transformation of human rights through a radical multiculturalism based in respect for human dignity. Critical legal scholars argue that the law is not static but open to contestation, interpretation and change. For example, Davina Cooper (2001, p. 143) explains that while the exposure of power inequalities does not in itself transform power, iteration of “counter-hegemonic pathways” can lead to the environmentalization of new laws. In calling for research

into the possibility of a new right to leadership, I critique the existing human rights framework's inability to adequately support participation as both a means and an end while simultaneously creatively and progressively imagining new human rights possibilities. I am also suggesting that the development and recognition of a new right to leadership would afford human rights more possibility to address and transform gender inequalities and contest power by explicitly mandating shared power and decision-making in both private and public life.

I call for further research into the possibility of the development of a new right to leadership in full awareness that such a possibility is both controversial and contested. It is my view that the potential of a new right to leadership to further gender equality and transform power is too compelling to ignore. The next section of this chapter also addresses possibilities raised by YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach, outlining the Y Intergenerational Leadership? Framework as a tool for women's organizations seeking to enhance intergenerational leadership and rights fulfillment.

Expanding Rights: The Y Intergenerational Leadership? Framework

YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach is a concrete leadership model which can be adapted and scaled-up within other women's organizations engaged in women's rights work. Based on the practice of YWCA Solomon Islands, I have developed a framework, complete with an overarching philosophy and concrete strategies, to support the expansion of young women's and intergenerational leadership work in women's organizations across the world. I am not suggesting that this framework will be appropriate in all spaces and places, nor

that it is an instant gratification solution. Rather, the Y Intergenerational Leadership?

Framework¹⁷ offers women's organizations tools and strategies to practice and model equality.

The Y Intergenerational Leadership? Framework has ten core components, each of which is interrelated with and interdependent on the others. While partial adoption of the framework might enhance intergenerational leadership within a given women's organization, the practice of equality is a complex and dynamic process that requires intense commitment to transformation, willingness to meet and overcome the inevitable struggles and challenges, and the courage to reach the depth and breadth of both the organization and its constituency. The ten components of the Y Intergenerational Leadership? Framework are:

1. **Participation:** Participation of young women with diverse intersectional identities as both a means and an end;
2. **Safe Spaces:** Safe spaces for diverse young women to articulate their priorities;
3. **Responsiveness:** Organizational responsiveness to diverse young women's priorities;
4. **Support:** Institutional supports that build capacity for diverse young women's leadership;
5. **Culture of Mentorship:** A culture of mentorship that recognizes the benefits to all parties in mentorship relationships;
6. **Young Women Teams:** Diverse young women teams as a strategy for both young women's leadership development and organizational change;
7. **Rights:** Young women and women knowing and claiming their rights within the organization and in their everyday lives;
8. **Shared Power:** The practice of power-sharing in leadership and decision-making at all levels of the organization;
9. **Community Engagement:** Deepening and broadening the participation and engagement of the community/constituency in the organization; and
10. **Advocacy:** Growing public awareness of women's rights and holding duty-bearers to account.

The core component of *Participation* can be described as the participation of young women with diverse intersectional identities as both a means and an end. Participation as a means involves ensuring that diverse young women are able to contribute their skills and knowledge within women's organizations equally with diverse older women. Diverse young

¹⁷ Y Intergenerational Leadership? Framework is the shortened form of the original name: YWCA Solomon Islands' Feminist Rights-Based Intergenerational Leadership Framework.

women are able to participate in leadership and decision-making in the organization at all levels: on the board of directors, committees, as staff, as volunteers and as members. As at YWCA Solomon Islands, participation as a means involves exposing and disrupting the invisibilized processes by which people in the organization gain access to power. Participation as an end includes rights fulfillment that changes the everyday material realities of diverse young women, their families and communities. Participation is evidenced by the fulfillment of diverse young women's right to full and equal participation in public life and decision-making, both within the organization and in the broader community.

The core component of *Safe Spaces* is characterized by safe spaces in which diverse young women are able to articulate their priorities. At YWCA Solomon Islands, the Rise Up! program is an important element of safe spaces because it builds the 'power within' of diverse young women at the grassroots and fosters dialogue from young women's standpoints. Through Rise Up!, young women articulate their priorities both for the organization and for their communities. Because Rise Up! was developed by young women for young women, it ensures an environment that is not only called safe, but where safety is practiced and reinforced through "respect". Intergenerational spaces must also be safe spaces for young women through the deliberate and active practice of intergenerational power-sharing and "respect", and a commitment to challenging exclusion "in the name of the parts of us that are not made at home" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1299).

Responsiveness is the core component comprising organizational responsiveness to diverse young women's priorities. At YWCA Solomon Islands, young women's stories, lived experiences and priorities influence and shape policy, programs and planning. For example, the Rise Up! program was developed in response to young women's requests for leadership

development. Not stopping with programming, YWCA Solomon Islands has welcomed former Rise Up! participants onto the board, as members of staff, as volunteers and as members. When young women in these roles share their priorities, the YWCA responds with changes to policy and programs as well as innovative partnerships and advocacy.

The core component of ***Support*** includes institutional supports that build capacity of both the organization and diverse young women for young women's leadership. Institutional supports include policy such as the constitution, bylaws, strategic plan and human resources policies. Budgets are another institutional support, and it is critical that adequate funds are allocated to young women's capacity building, leadership development opportunities, and organizational change processes. For example, at YWCA Solomon Islands funds are set aside to pay partial staff salaries while staff are on extended training courses. Funds are also allocated to staff training and supporting young women to attend international meetings and events. While a spoken or written commitment to young women's leadership is important, without budgetary support organizations will be unable to follow through.

Culture of Mentorship as a core component means a culture of mentorship that recognizes the benefits to all parties in mentorship relationships. At YWCA Solomon Islands, mentorship is not a formal program but a fundamental commitment of each person in the organization. Practicing mentorship builds the capacity of young women as mentors, while simultaneously supporting the development of specific knowledge and skills among those with whom mentors interact. Critically, mentorship is not conceptualized as a top-down process where older women teach younger women to become like them. It is an organic intergenerational process in which people share their skills and knowledge with one another, along with a

commitment to ongoing learning. The practice of mentorship reinforces an organizational culture dedicated to young women's leadership development.

The core component *Young Women Teams* involves diverse young women teams as a strategy for both young women's leadership development and organizational change. Building on the literature on critical mass (Grey, 2006; O'Connor, 2010), creating space for young women teams allows young women to teach and learn from one other, identify and articulate priorities, and develop 'power within' and 'power with'. At YWCA Solomon Islands, young women teams empower each other both to develop innovative enactments of democracy within the organization, and to challenge gender inequality and social injustice in the wider community. Young women teams are also safe spaces where young women can make mistakes and develop their leadership. Young women teams function at the board, staff and volunteer levels of the organization, and at times include young women with diverse roles in the organization as part of a learning culture.

Rights is the core component that ensures that young women and women know and claim their rights within the organization and in their everyday lives. In order to demand accountability of duty-holders and claim their rights, young women must first know their rights. At YWCA Solomon Islands, the Rise Up! and Sistas Savve programs teach young women about human rights and allow young women to explore what rights mean in their everyday lives and their priorities within human rights. Young women then engage other young people in their communities to explore human rights and to plan and enact change that leads to greater rights fulfillment. For example, young women in different parts of Solomon Islands are starting to claim their right to participate in public decision-making about *kastom* land use. Young women

are also claiming their right to participate in decision-making within the organization, as evidenced by the election of a hostel tenant to the YWCA Solomon Islands board.

Shared Power is the core component that encompasses the practice of power-sharing in leadership and decision-making at all levels of the organization. At YWCA Solomon Islands, shared power includes young women and women of diverse intersectional identities and commitment to the human rights principles of equality, non-discrimination, participation and accountability. It dates back to the traditional understanding of leadership in Solomon Islands as the gathering and distribution of resources, and includes shared responsibility and decision-making. Shared power is not only about formal leadership positions, but about informal interactions among young women and women at all levels of the organization including among participants.

Community Engagement as a core component involves deepening and broadening the participation and engagement of the community/constituency in the organization. At YWCA Solomon Islands, before the Rise Up! program is delivered in a new community, peer educators host a community meeting to build support for young women's leadership. Community engagement also includes welcoming former program participants and community members new to the organization into leadership and decision-making. To strengthen accountability to its constituency and further its mission, YWCA Solomon Islands reaches out to young women in communities it has not yet reached and works with those young women toward greater rights fulfillment. Partnerships are an important strategy for expanding YWCA Solomon Islands' community engagement.

Advocacy as a core component includes both growing public awareness of women's rights and holding duty-bearers to account. Advocacy takes place in meetings with policy

makers, in informal interactions with family and community members, and through specific organizational initiatives. One of YWCA Solomon Islands' advocacy initiatives is dramatic presentations about violence against women in a local market, with the result that one woman reported her husband's violence to the police and he was sentenced to eighteen months in prison. Another aspect of YWCA Solomon Islands' advocacy is direct meetings with government and the judiciary to raise awareness about specific rights violations, such as insufficient penalties for rape convictions, and possible solutions such as changing policies that prevent young women from returning to secondary school once they become pregnant.

The Y Intergenerational Leadership? Framework documents the successes of YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach and leadership model. It offers other women's organizations strategies to deepen and enhance their practice of intergenerational leadership and to practice equality.

Conclusion

The strategies contained within YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach together support the fulfillment of the rights of women, young women and girls, both inside YWCA Solomon Islands and in their everyday lives. The Rise Up! young women's leadership program is an opportunity for young women to build the knowledge and skills to claim their rights, shifting power and gender inequalities in their families and communities. I call for the development of a new right to leadership in order to radicalize and strengthen the right to participation. The Y Intergenerational Leadership? Framework is my documentation of the key components of YWCA Solomon Islands feminist rights-based approach for adaptation and adoption by other women's organizations. Growing out of the practice of rights by diverse women and young women at the grassroots, YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based

approach is a leadership model proven to achieve shared power, intergenerational collaboration and increased enjoyment of rights.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach to young women's and intergenerational leadership supports the fulfillment of rights. Through YWCA Solomon Islands, young women learn their rights, become confident rights defenders, and influence increased equality both within the YWCA and in families, communities, and the nation. YWCA Solomon Islands is inclusive of women and young women with diverse intersectional identities as impacted by ethnicity, culture, community, age, class, faith, and socio-economic status. Key components of YWCA Solomon Islands' approach, highlighted within the Y Intergenerational Leadership? Framework, include participation as both a means and an end, safe spaces, organizational responsiveness to young women's priorities, institutional supports, a culture of mentorship, young women teams, support for young women to learn and claim their rights, shared power, community engagement, and advocacy. YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach effectively implements intergenerational leadership that leads to greater fulfillment rights.

There is urgent need for women's organizations to learn from YWCA Solomon Islands, and implement feminist rights-based approaches. Young women form a significant component of the constituencies of women's organizations around the world, especially in so-called developing countries where the average youth population is 87%¹⁸. In an era of decreasing protection of rights by states increasingly concerned with security and trade, young women are the population most vulnerable to rights violations. Inequality results in increased vulnerability for young women of more marginalized intersectional identities. The standpoints and experiences of young women provide them with expertise on rights violations, while feminist rights-based approaches

¹⁸ <http://www.beyond2015.org/children-and-youth-working-group>.

equip young women to claim their rights within women's organizations, families and communities. Women's organizations committed to human rights can "change their own practices to be consistent with the objective of integrating and realizing human rights in development" (Rajagopal, 2003, p. 224) by adapting and adopting the Y Intergenerational Leadership? Framework.

Implementing feminist rights-based approaches is challenging, as demonstrated by YWCA Solomon Islands' experience. Challenges to full implementation might include power inequalities between particular individuals and groups, the exclusion of membership or particular groups of members from decision-making, and external environments adverse to women's rights advocacy and fulfillment. The possibility of impacting real and lasting rights fulfillment is incentive to face the challenges, and engage in ongoing work to reduce and overcome them.

Reflecting on my own experiences of both empowerment and disempowerment as a young women leader in women's organizations, I wish that I had known about the power and potential of feminist rights-based approaches such as the one implemented by YWCA Solomon Islands. Through a model such as the Y Intergenerational Leadership? Framework, we would have been able to explore strategies to address generational power inequalities such as safe spaces, organizational responsiveness, a culture of mentorship, young women teams, and shared power. The deliberate creation of safe spaces would have provided young women staff, myself included, and the membership, opportunities to articulate our priorities and influence policy and programs. A culture of mentorship and young women teams would have built my confidence, and that of other young women, to claim our rights. While shared power, leadership and decision-making as a deliberate strategy would have created space to address and reduce tense power dynamics through respect.

Revisiting my question: *what makes one NGO a safe space for young women's leadership and another a site of violations of young women's rights*, I see that feminist rights-based approaches transform women's organizations into safe spaces while addressing the challenges of implementation increases the level of safety for women and young women with diverse intersectional identities. In response to my query whether other NGOs can learn from women's organizations that successfully support young women's leadership, I believe that other NGOs can learn if they are open to feminist rights-based approaches and willing to overcome the challenges inherent in transformation. The Y Intergenerational Leadership? Framework is available to support this work.

Given the challenges faced by YWCA Solomon Islands, further research is needed to identify effective strategies for recognizing and addressing the complexities of applying feminist rights-based approaches in different kinds of organizations and overcoming obstacles to full implementation. Action research with women's organizations willing to adopt feminist rights-based approaches might be one way to learn more and further document strategies for transforming women's organizations toward safe spaces for young women's and intergenerational leadership that simultaneously create space for greater rights fulfillment within the organizations themselves and in families, communities and nations.

Key to this work is making visible generational inequalities within women's organizations, largely invisibilized in feminist literature on power, as well as work on both children and development and gender and development. For women's organizations and feminist theorists constantly challenging the invisibility of gender among other intersectionalities, it is critical to analyze and address the impacts of generational inequalities. This paper contributes to both feminist and development theory an analysis of the ways in which generational inequalities

impact young women's access to power in women's organizations and preclude the fulfillment of young women's rights in their lives and communities. This work is critical for several reasons: (i) young women form a significant constituency for women's organizations; (ii) human rights work necessitates attention to those most vulnerable to rights violations – namely young women; (iii) rights-based approaches require shared power, which in women's organizations includes power sharing among all generations of women; (iv) the feminist principle of intersectionality necessitates attention to generational inequality; and (v) accountable feminist leadership includes “power-sharing across generations” (African Feminist Forum, 2006, p. 13). One strength of YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach is its ability to address and transform generational inequalities.

I travelled to YWCA Solomon Islands in search of an outlier; a women's organization practicing equality through a model of successful young women's and intergenerational leadership. What I found were the dynamic, multi-layered and at times messy stories of young women and women working together to practice intergenerational leadership and fulfill rights. YWCA Solomon Islands has no pretensions, and does not necessarily consider itself a site of leading practice. But as an organization that acknowledges its challenges, strives to foster and support the leadership and rights of an ever-growing number of young women, and truly lives its values of equality, non-discrimination, participation and accountability, YWCA Solomon Islands offers lessons that would strengthen the practice of many women's organizations in both the Global North and Global South. It is so easy to call for others to change; to think of others as duty-bearers; to see others as responsible for fulfilling women's rights. It takes great courage to hold ourselves to account for the rights protected by international human rights treaties; to create organizations that practice equality; to be the change.

Women's organizations that hear the story of YWCA Solomon Islands' feminist rights-based approach as a call to action stand at the door of opportunity, and the Y Intergenerational Leadership? Framework sits just on the other side. The first step is to reach out, toward accountability to diverse young women; toward greater fulfillment of rights; toward equality. The second is profound commitment, sufficient to sustain momentum through myriad challenges. The third is action. Part of the journey is to overcome conceptualizations of power as zero-sum, to let go of the deep-seated fears that prevent power-sharing, and to embrace 'power within' and 'power with' as key to practicing equality. We owe our communities the courage to try.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. What brought you to the YWCA? What keeps you at the YWCA?
2. How are you connected to the YWCA? Do you have multiple roles or relationships? Please describe each one. Has this changed over time?
3. Who does the YWCA serve? Who benefits from the work of the YWCA?
4. What kinds of relationships does the YWCA have with the people it serves?
5. What kinds of impacts do you see the YWCA having in the communities it serves?
6. Why do you think the YWCA is able to have these impacts? What is it about the YWCA's philosophy and practice that helps these impacts to happen?
7. What does a "rights-based approach" or a "human rights-based approach" mean to you?
8. In your experience and in your opinion, does the YWCA use a rights-based approach? Please explain.
9. Has this changed since you were first connected with the YWCA? Please explain.
10. In your experience and opinion, does using a rights-based approach help the YWCA to have the impacts it does in the communities it serves?
11. In the YWCA we talk a lot about intergenerational leadership. Do you see the YWCA practicing intergenerational leadership? Please explain.
12. In your experience and opinion, does the YWCA support young women's leadership? Please explain.
13. Has this changed since you were first connected with the YWCA? Please explain.
14. In your experience and opinion, does the YWCA's practice of young women's leadership help the YWCA to have the impacts it does in the communities it serves?
15. Is there anything else about the YWCA I should be asking or thinking about?

Appendix B: Participant Consent Form

Name _____ Date: _____

Study Name: Intergenerational Rights-Based Women's Organizations

Hi! My name is Jessica Notwell and I am a graduate student at York University. As part of my Master's degree, I am researching what allows some young and long-established women leaders to succeed at sharing leadership and how these impacts the work women's organizations do in communities, including women's rights work. In order for you to participate in the study, I need your permission.

What You Will Be Asked to Do in the Research

If you agree to participate in the research, you may be asked to:

- ✓ Talk about your experiences and opinions in one or more interviews
- ✓ Be part of a group discussion about shared leadership and women's rights work
- ✓ Share your thoughts about training materials on shared leadership and women's rights

Your time is valuable and you will be asked how much time you want to spend participating in the research. Each interview or group discussion will take about one to one and one-half hours.

Information will be collected using audio recordings and notes on the conversations that happen during the study. The research will be shared in a research report, and possibly also in presentations and articles about the research.

Benefits of the Research

This study is designed to help women's organizations learn about what allows young and long-established women leaders to successfully work together to change lives in their communities. The hope is that the information learned will help women's organizations to become even more effective at women's rights work.

Risks and Discomforts

I do not foresee any risks or discomfort from your participation in the research.

Voluntary Participation

It is completely your decision to choose to participate in the research or not, and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Even if you agree to participate in the research, you should refuse to answer any questions that you would rather not reply to. Also, you are free to refuse to participate in some parts of the study and not others.

Neither participation in the project, nor refusal to participate, will affect your relationship with the YWCA the researcher, or York University now or in the future. If you choose to withdraw from the study, all information about your participation in the study, and the ideas and questions you shared during the study, will be destroyed right away.

Confidentiality

All information collected during this study will be in the form of audio recordings and written notes.

It is important that all the information we collect is kept confidential, so in our written records we will not use your real name. All reports, articles and presentations about the research will be done in such a way that even someone who knows you participated in the project will not be able to identify your information. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

The information we collect will be safely stored in a locked facility for a minimum of 10 years and only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the information. Afterward, all computer and electronic files, audio recordings, and hard copy notes will be destroyed by deleting all records.

Questions About the Research?

We will be happy to discuss our research with you as we go along. Do not hesitate to ask should you have any questions concerning this study, right now or at any time during the research. Do you have any questions right now?

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Human Participants Review Subcommittee of York University and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines.

If you have any further questions about the research, or your participation in this study, please contact:	If you have any questions about the Ethics process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, please contact:	
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Legal Rights and Signatures:

I, (name) _____, consent to participate in the study Intergenerational Rights-Based Women's Organizations conducted by Jessica Notwell.

I understand what this project is about and I wish to participate. My signature below means that I consent. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form.

Signature _____
Participant

Date _____

Signature _____
Jessica Notwell, Primary Researcher

Date _____